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KELL-O-GRAPHICS

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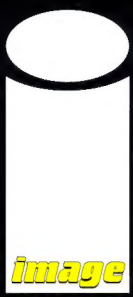
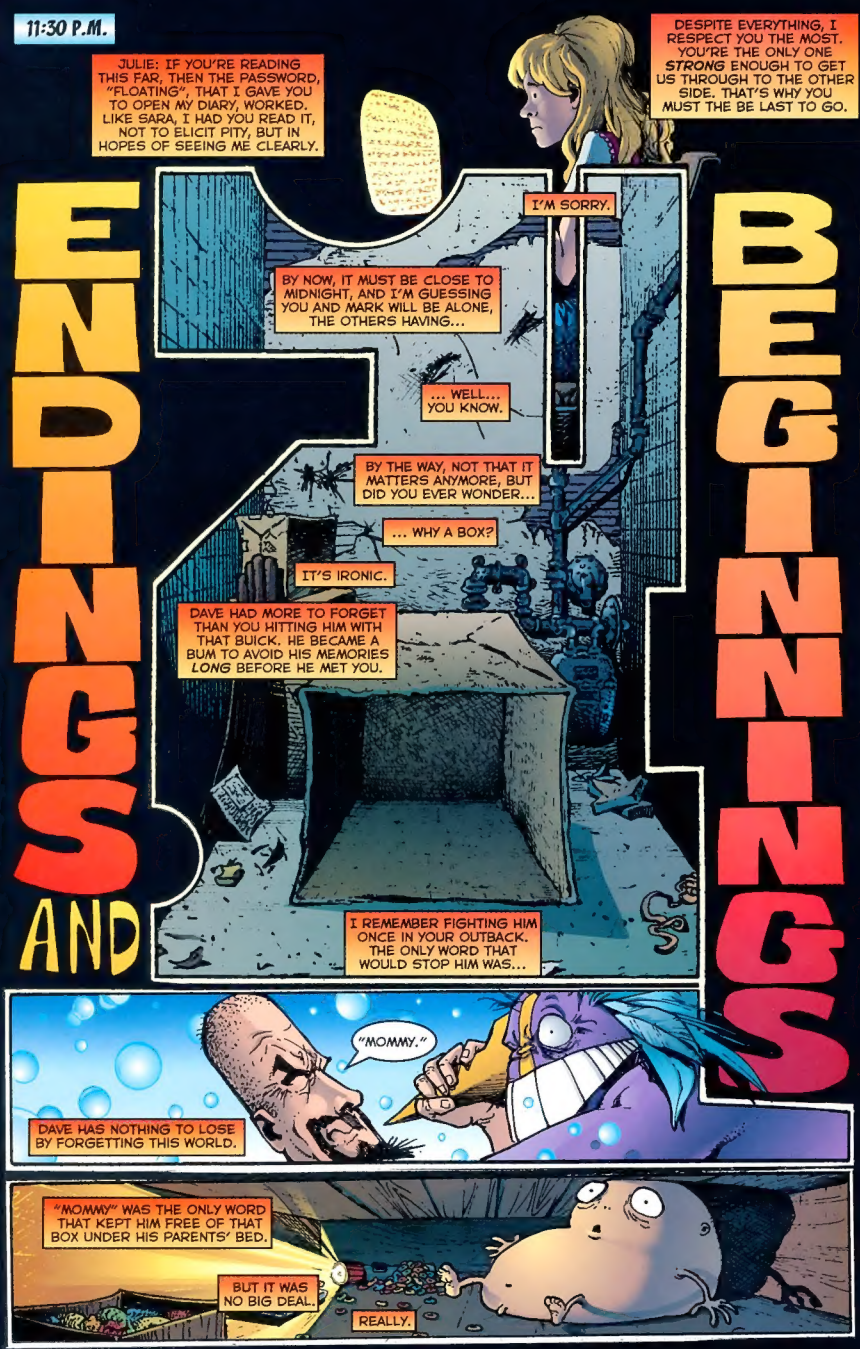
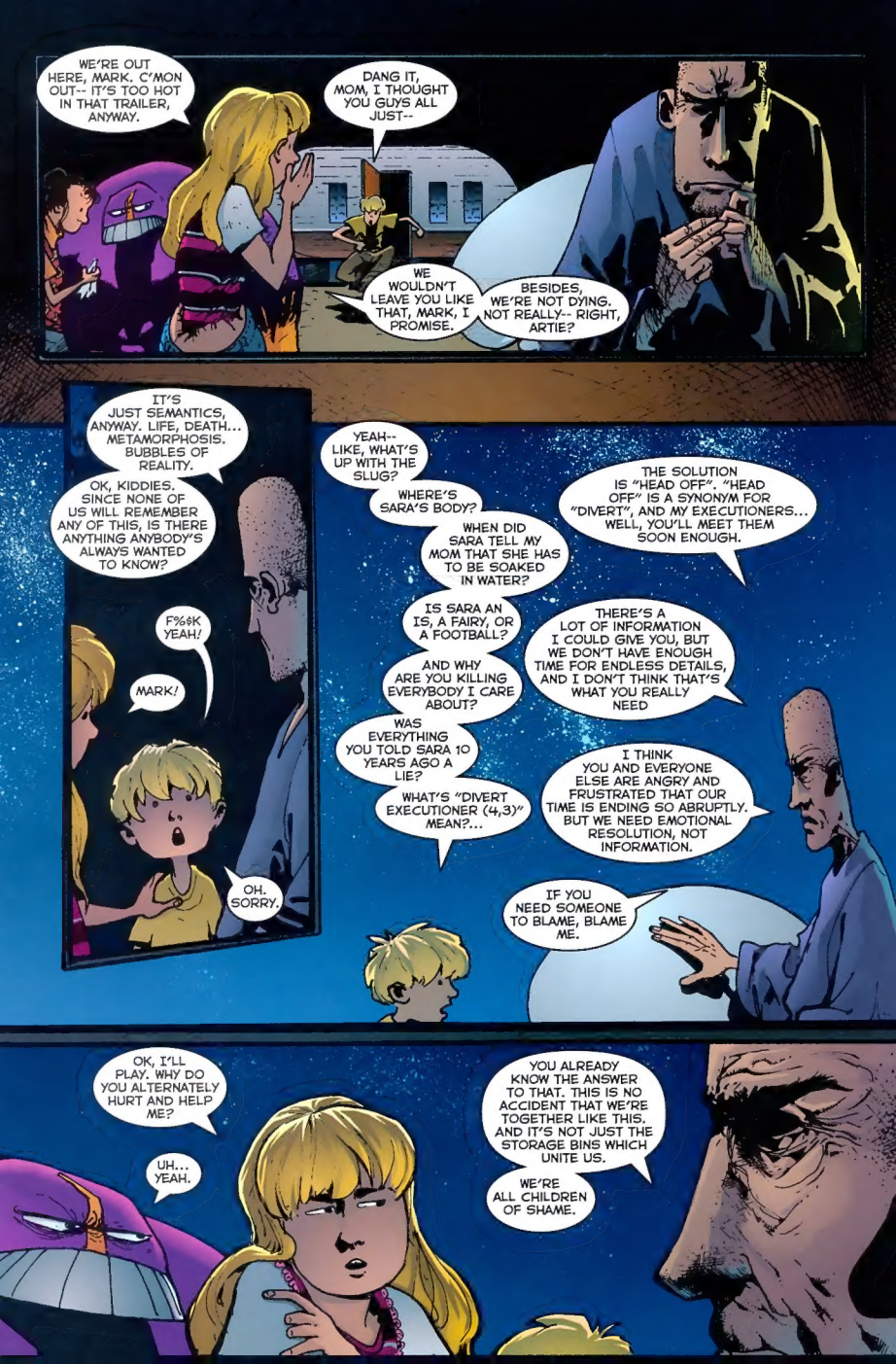
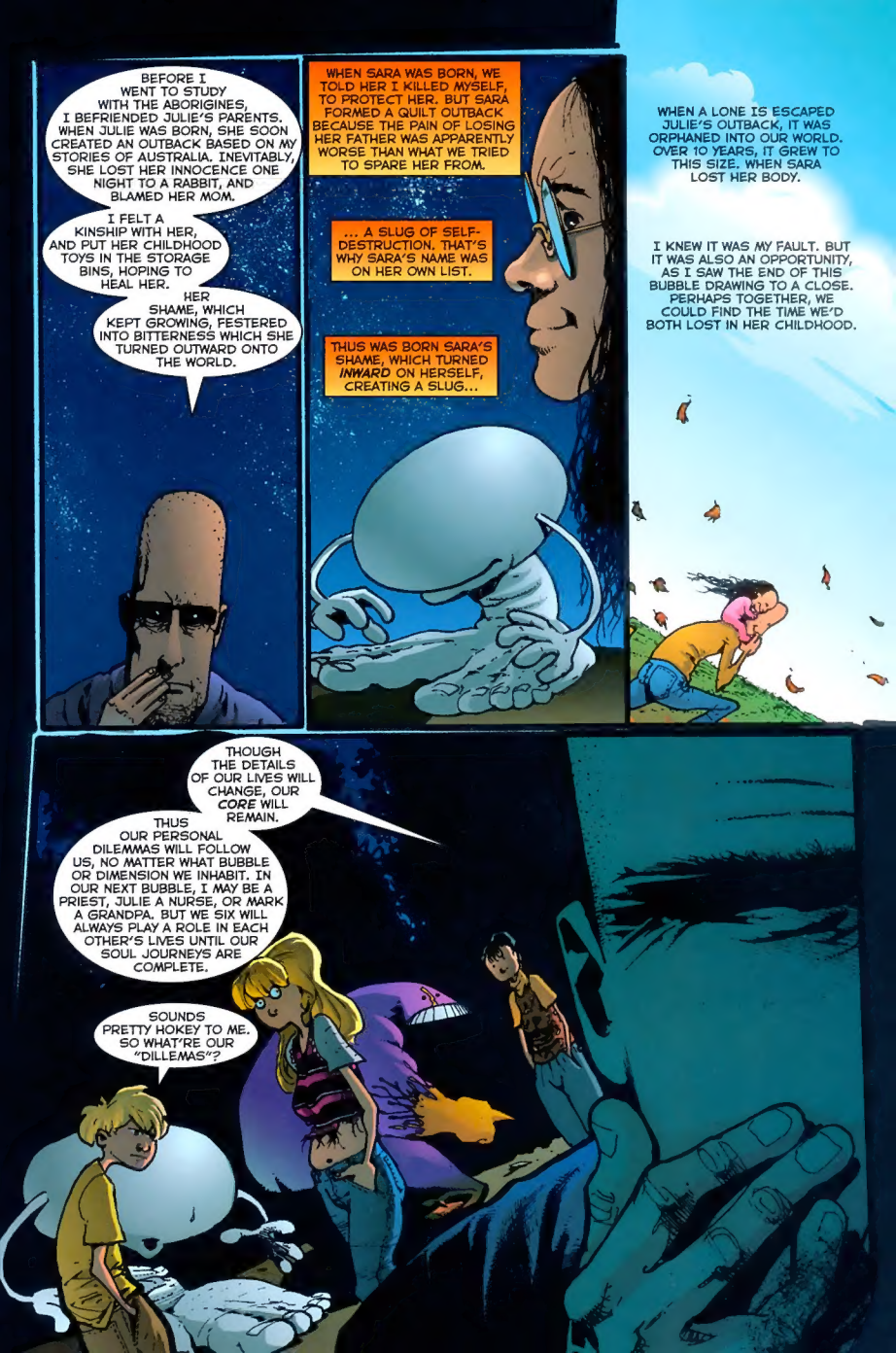
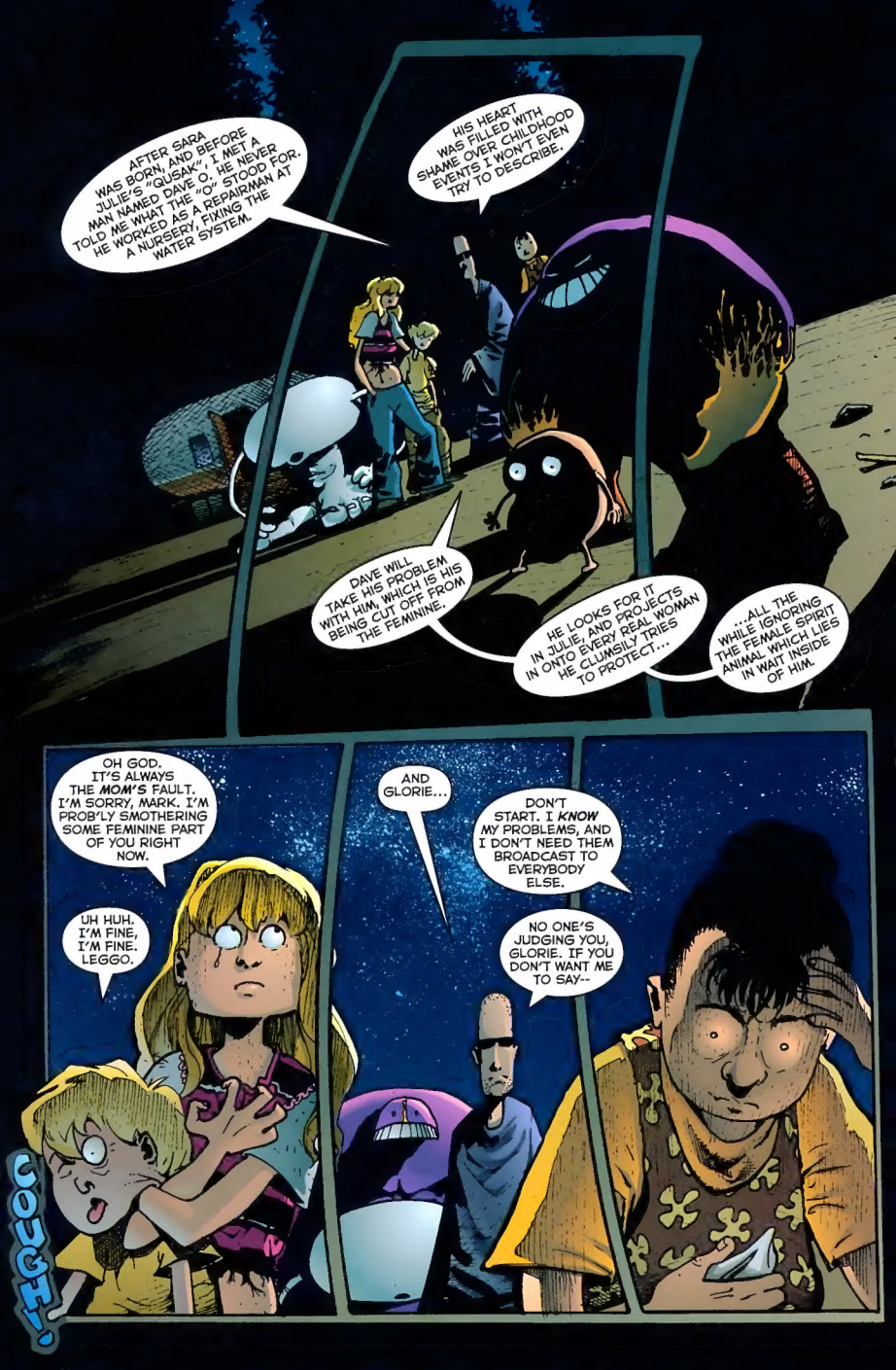


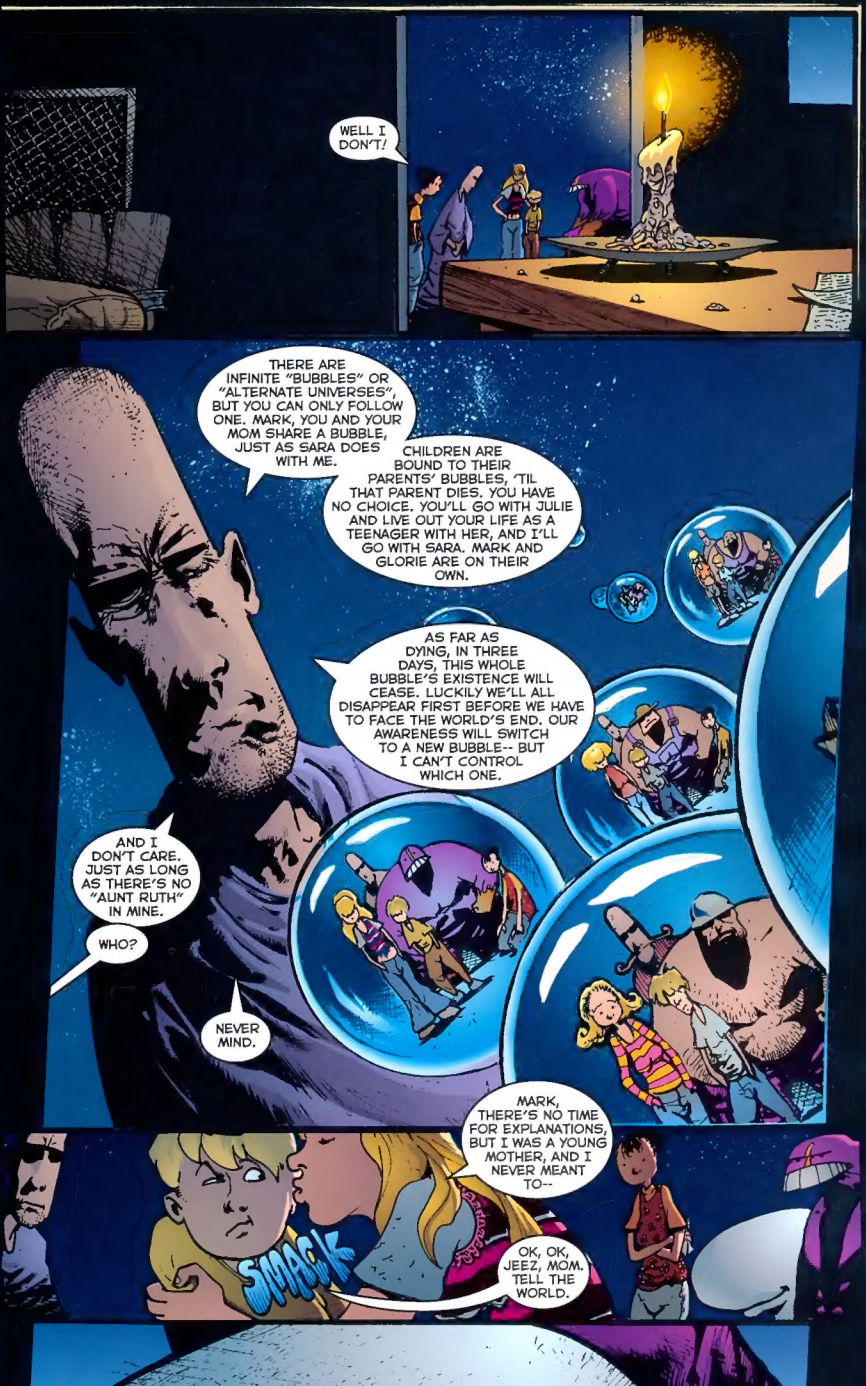

11:30 P.M.
JULIE: IF YOU'RE READING THIS FAR, THEN THE PASSWORD, "FLOATING", THAT I GAVE YOU TO OPEN MY DIARY, WORKED. LIKE SARA, I HAD YOU READ IT, NOT TO ELICIT PITY, BUT IN HOPES OF SEEING ME CLEARLY.
DESPITE EVERYTHING, I RESPECT YOU THE MOST. YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE *STRONG* ENOUGH TO GET US THROUGH TO THE OTHER SIDE. THAT'S WHY YOU MUST THE BE LAST TO GO.
I'M SORRY.
BY NOW, IT MUST BE CLOSE TO MIDNIGHT, AND I'M GUESSING YOU AND MARK WILL BE ALONE, THE OTHERS HAVING...
... WELL... YOU KNOW.
BY THE WAY, NOT THAT IT MATTERS ANYMORE, BUT DID YOU EVER WONDER...
... WHY A BOX?
IT'S IRONIC.
DAVE HAD MORE TO FORGET THAN YOU HITTING HIM WITH THAT BUICK. HE BECAME A BUM TO AVOID HIS MEMORIES *LONG* BEFORE HE MET YOU.
I REMEMBER FIGHTING HIM ONCE IN YOUR OUTBACK. THE ONLY WORD THAT WOULD STOP HIM WAS...
ENDINGS AND BEGINNINGS
"MOMMY."
DAVE HAS NOTHING TO LOSE BY FORGETTING THIS WORLD.
"MOMMY" WAS THE ONLY WORD THAT KEPT HIM FREE OF THAT BOX UNDER HIS PARENTS' BED.
BUT IT WAS NO BIG DEAL.
REALLY.

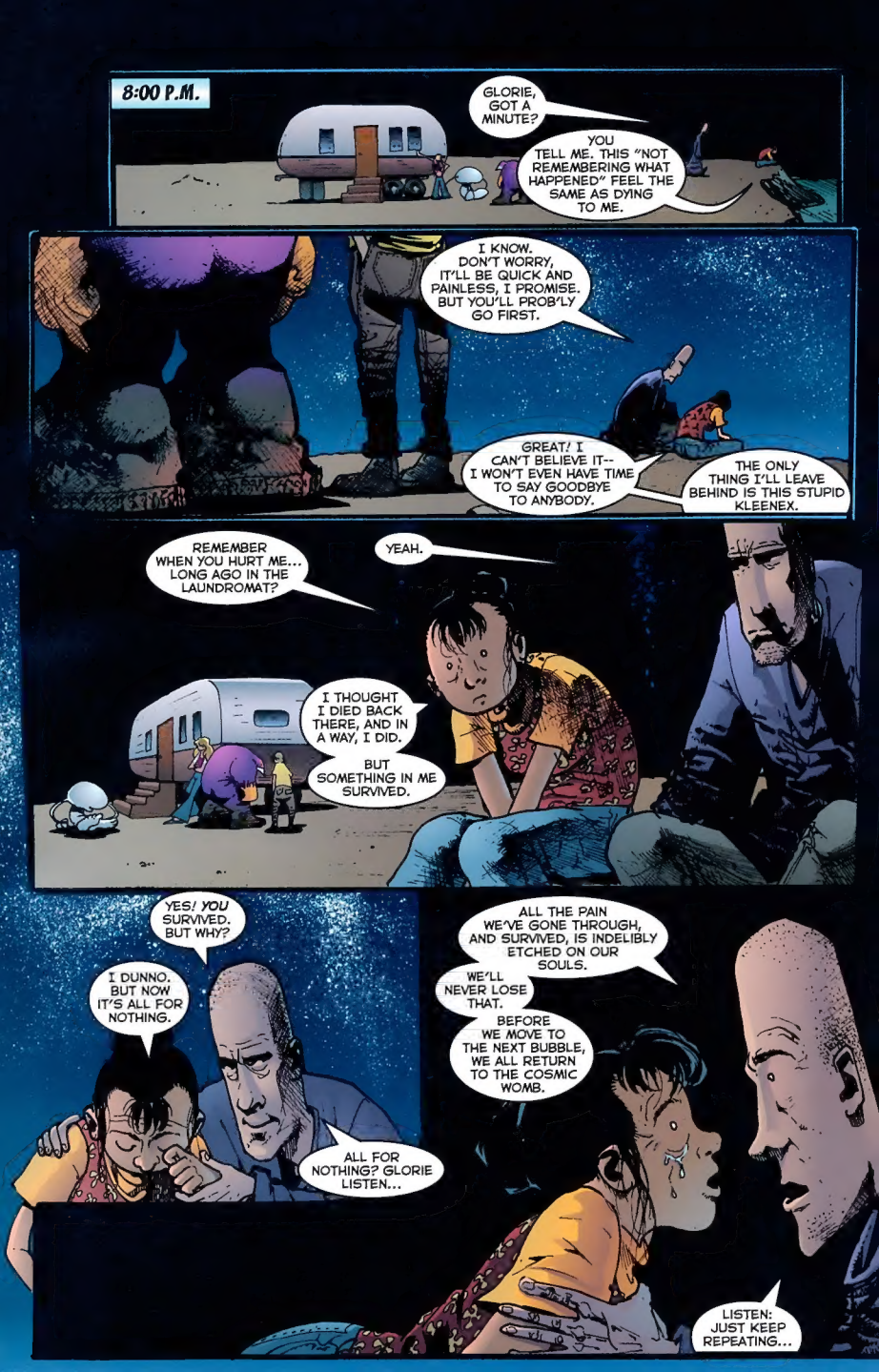
6 HOURS EARLIER
RIGHT, "DAVE"?
HEY MAXX, WAKE UP. YOU HAVE A NIGHTMARE OR SOMETHIN'?
YEAH... I WAS A KID AGAIN...
WHAT HAPPENED?
NOTHING. IT WAS NO BIG DEAL. REALLY.
CAN WE JUST FORGET IT?
I'M TOO LATE! OH GOD!!! THEY'VE ALL DISAPPEARED! SH*T!!! IF ONLY I WOULDN'T HAVE TAKEN SUCH A LONG...
WHUMP
... POOP.
MOM?!?
DAVE???
ARTIE?

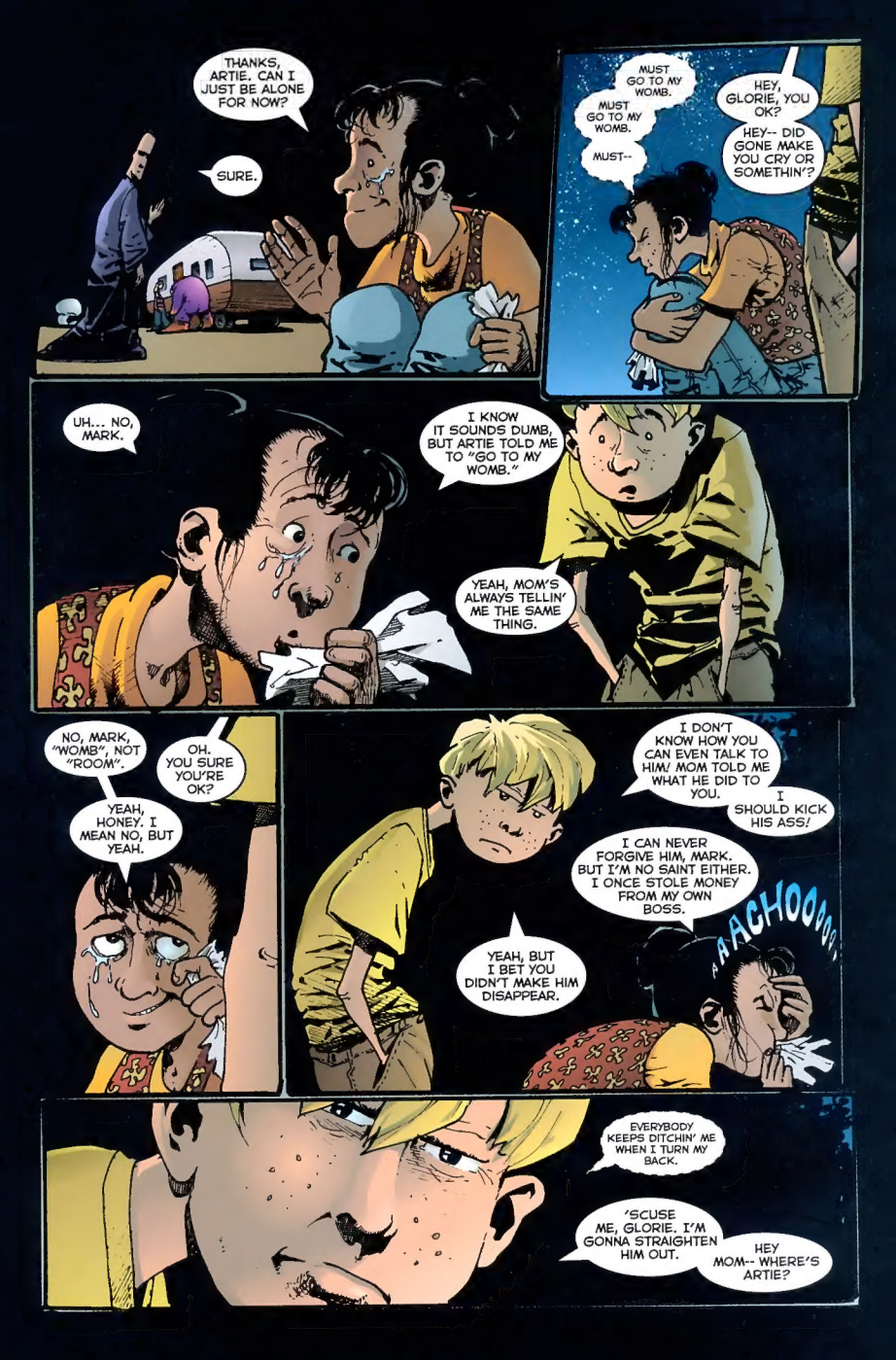

WE'RE OUT HERE, MARK. C'MON OUT-- IT'S TOO HOT IN THAT TRAILER, ANYWAY.
DANG IT, MOM, I THOUGHT YOU GUYS ALL JUST--
WE WOULDN'T LEAVE YOU LIKE THAT, MARK, I PROMISE.
BESIDES, WE'RE NOT DYING. NOT REALLY-- RIGHT, ARTIE?
IT'S JUST SEMANTICS, ANYWAY. LIFE, DEATH... METAMORPHOSIS. BUBBLES OF REALITY.
OK, KIDDIES. SINCE NONE OF US WILL REMEMBER ANY OF THIS, IS THERE ANYTHING ANYBODY'S ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW?
F%$K YEAH!
MARK!
OH. SORRY.
YEAH-- LIKE, WHAT'S UP WITH THE SLUG?
WHERE'S SARA'S BODY?
WHEN DID SARA TELL MY MOM THAT SHE HAS TO BE SOAKED IN WATER?
IS SARA AN IS, A FAIRY, OR A FOOTBALL?
AND WHY ARE YOU KILLING EVERYBODY I CARE ABOUT?
WAS EVERYTHING YOU TOLD SARA 10 YEARS AGO A LIE?
WHAT'S "DIVERT EXECUTIONER (4,3)" MEAN?...
THE SOLUTION IS "HEAD OFF". "HEAD OFF" IS A SYNONYM FOR "DIVERT", AND MY EXECUTIONERS... WELL, YOU'LL MEET THEM SOON ENOUGH.
THERE'S A LOT OF INFORMATION I COULD GIVE YOU, BUT WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME FOR ENDLESS DETAILS, AND I DON'T THINK THAT'S WHAT YOU REALLY NEED
I THINK YOU AND EVERYONE ELSE ARE ANGRY AND FRUSTRATED THAT OUR TIME IS ENDING SO ABRUPTLY. BUT WE NEED EMOTIONAL RESOLUTION, NOT INFORMATION.
IF YOU NEED SOMEONE TO BLAME, BLAME ME.
OK, I'LL PLAY. WHY DO YOU ALTERNATELY HURT AND HELP ME?
UH... YEAH.
YOU ALREADY KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT. THIS IS NO ACCIDENT THAT WE'RE TOGETHER LIKE THIS. AND IT'S NOT JUST THE STORAGE BINS WHICH UNITE US.
WE'RE ALL CHILDREN OF SHAME.

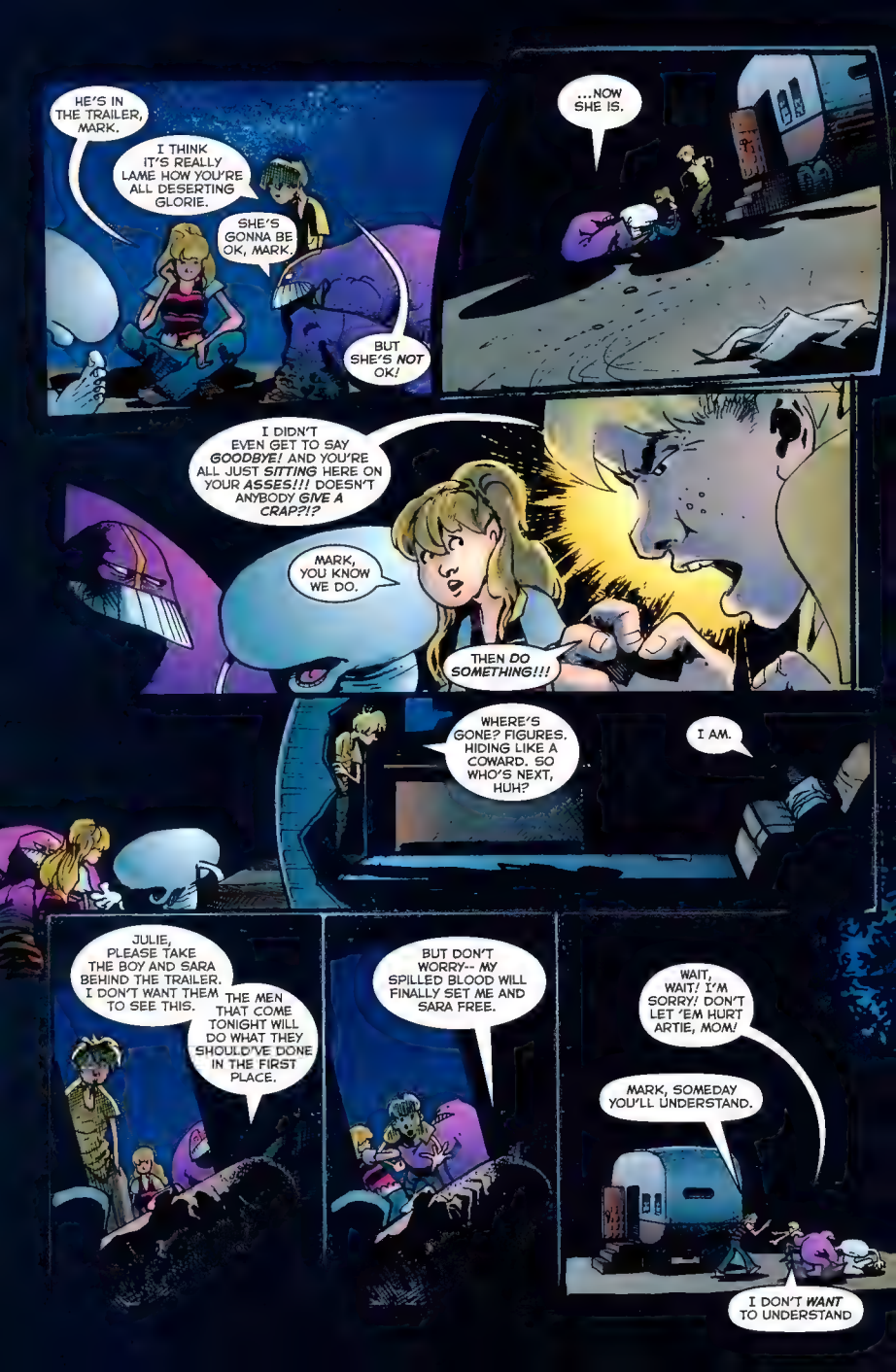

BEFORE I WENT TO STUDY WITH THE ABORIGINES, I BEFRIENDED JULIE'S PARENTS. WHEN JULIE WAS BORN, SHE SOON CREATED AN OUTBACK BASED ON MY STORIES OF AUSTRALIA. INEVITABLY, SHE LOST HER INNOCENCE ONE NIGHT TO A RABBIT, AND BLAMED HER MOM.
I FELT A KINSHIP WITH HER, AND PUT HER CHILDHOOD TOYS IN THE STORAGE BINS, HOPING TO HEAL HER.
HER SHAME, WHICH KEPT GROWING, FESTERED INTO BITTERNESS WHICH SHE TURNED OUTWARD ONTO THE WORLD.
WHEN SARA WAS BORN, WE TOLD HER I KILLED MYSELF, TO PROTECT HER. BUT SARA FORMED A QUILT OUTBACK BECAUSE THE PAIN OF LOSING HER FATHER WAS APPARENTLY WORSE THAN WHAT WE TRIED TO SPARE HER FROM.
... A SLUG OF SELF-DESTRUCTION. THAT'S WHY SARA'S NAME WAS ON HER OWN LIST.
THUS WAS BORN SARA'S SHAME, WHICH TURNED INWARD ON HERSELF, CREATING A SLUG...
WHEN A LONE IS ESCAPED JULIE'S OUTBACK, IT WAS ORPHANED INTO OUR WORLD. OVER 10 YEARS, IT GREW TO THIS SIZE. WHEN SARA LOST HER BODY.
I KNEW IT WAS MY FAULT. BUT IT WAS ALSO AN OPPORTUNITY, AS I SAW THE END OF THIS BUBBLE DRAWING TO A CLOSE. PERHAPS TOGETHER, WE COULD FIND THE TIME WE'D BOTH LOST IN HER CHILDHOOD.
THOUGH THE DETAILS OF OUR LIVES WILL CHANGE, OUR CORE WILL REMAIN.
THUS OUR PERSONAL DILEMMAS WILL FOLLOW US, NO MATTER WHAT BUBBLE OR DIMENSION WE INHABIT. IN OUR NEXT BUBBLE, I MAY BE A PRIEST, JULIE A NURSE, OR MARK A GRANDPA. BUT WE SIX WILL ALWAYS PLAY A ROLE IN EACH OTHER'S LIVES UNTIL OUR SOUL JOURNEYS ARE COMPLETE.
SOUNDS PRETTY HOKEY TO ME. SO WHAT'RE OUR "DILLEMAS"?


AFTER SARA WAS BORN, AND BEFORE JULIE'S "QUSAK", I MET A MAN NAMED DAVE O. HE NEVER TOLD ME WHAT THE "O" STOOD FOR. HE WORKED AS A REPAIRMAN AT A NURSERY, FIXING THE WATER SYSTEM.
HIS HEART WAS FILLED WITH SHAME OVER CHILDHOOD EVENTS I WON'T EVEN TRY TO DESCRIBE.
DAVE WILL TAKE HIS PROBLEM WITH HIM, WHICH IS HIS BEING CUT OFF FROM THE FEMININE.
HE LOOKS FOR IT IN JULIE, AND PROJECTS IN ONTO EVERY REAL WOMAN HE CLUMSILY TRIES TO PROTECT...
...ALL THE WHILE IGNORING THE FEMALE SPIRIT ANIMAL WHICH LIES IN WAIT INSIDE OF HIM.
OH GOD. IT'S ALWAYS THE *MOM'S* FAULT. I'M SORRY, MARK. I'M PROB'LY SMOTHERING SOME FEMININE PART OF YOU RIGHT NOW.
UH HUH. I'M FINE, I'M FINE. LEGGO.
AND GLORIE...
DON'T START. I *KNOW* MY PROBLEMS, AND I DON'T NEED THEM BROADCAST TO EVERYBODY ELSE.
NO ONE'S JUDGING YOU, GLORIE. IF YOU DON'T WANT ME TO SAY--
OOGH!

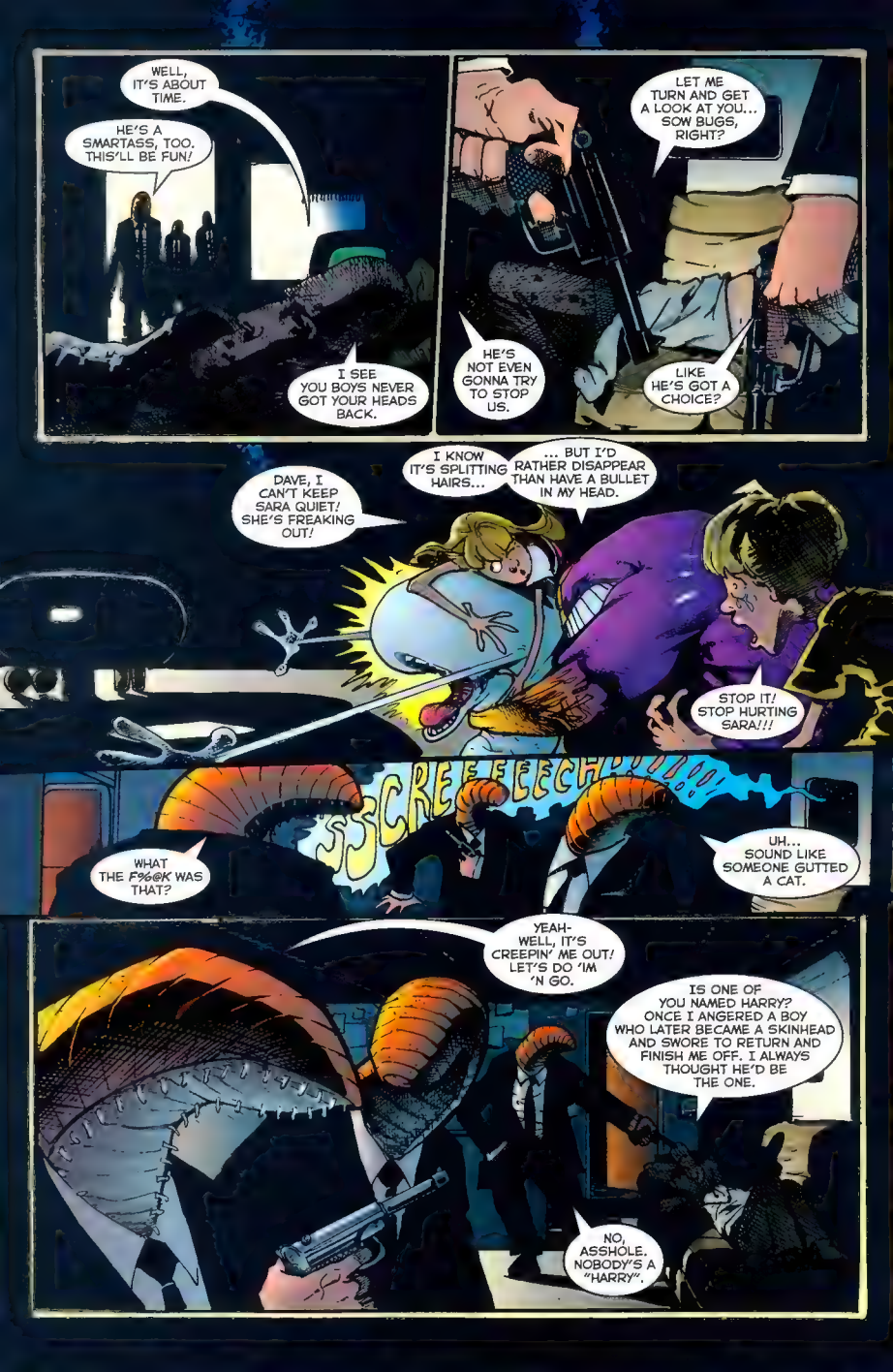

WELL I DON'T!
THERE ARE INFINITE "BUBBLES" OR "ALTERNATE UNIVERSES", BUT YOU CAN ONLY FOLLOW ONE. MARK, YOU AND YOUR MOM SHARE A BUBBLE, JUST AS SARA DOES WITH ME.
CHILDREN ARE BOUND TO THEIR PARENTS' BUBBLES, 'TIL THAT PARENT DIES. YOU HAVE NO CHOICE. YOU'LL GO WITH JULIE AND LIVE OUT YOUR LIFE AS A TEENAGER WITH HER, AND I'LL GO WITH SARA. MARK AND GLORIE ARE ON THEIR OWN.
AS FAR AS DYING, IN THREE DAYS, THIS WHOLE BUBBLE'S EXISTENCE WILL CEASE. LUCKILY WE'LL ALL DISAPPEAR FIRST BEFORE WE HAVE TO FACE THE WORLD'S END. OUR AWARENESS WILL SWITCH TO A NEW BUBBLE-- BUT I CAN'T CONTROL WHICH ONE.
AND I DON'T CARE. JUST AS LONG AS THERE'S NO "AUNT RUTH" IN MINE.
WHO?
NEVER MIND.
MARK, THERE'S NO TIME FOR EXPLANATIONS, BUT I WAS A YOUNG MOTHER, AND I NEVER MEANT TO--
SMACK
OK, OK, JEEZ, MOM. TELL THE WORLD.


8:00 P.M.
GLORIE, GOT A MINUTE?
YOU TELL ME. THIS "NOT REMEMBERING WHAT HAPPENED" FEEL THE SAME AS DYING TO ME.
I KNOW. DON'T WORRY, IT'LL BE QUICK AND PAINLESS, I PROMISE. BUT YOU'LL PROB'LY GO FIRST.
GREAT! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT-- I WON'T EVEN HAVE TIME TO SAY GOODBYE TO ANYBODY.
THE ONLY THING I'LL LEAVE BEHIND IS THIS STUPID KLEENEX.
REMEMBER WHEN YOU HURT ME... LONG AGO IN THE LAUNDROMAT?
YEAH.
I THOUGHT I DIED BACK THERE, AND IN A WAY, I DID.
BUT SOMETHING IN ME SURVIVED.
YES! YOU SURVIVED. BUT WHY?
I DUNNO. BUT NOW IT'S ALL FOR NOTHING.
ALL FOR NOTHING? GLORIE LISTEN...
ALL THE PAIN WE'VE GONE THROUGH, AND SURVIVED, IS INDELIBLY ETCHED ON OUR SOULS.
WE'LL NEVER LOSE THAT.
BEFORE WE MOVE TO THE NEXT BUBBLE, WE ALL RETURN TO THE COSMIC WOMB.
LISTEN: JUST KEEP REPEATING...


THANKS, ARTIE. CAN I JUST BE ALONE FOR NOW?
SURE.
MUST GO TO MY WOMB.
MUST GO TO MY WOMB.
MUST--
HEY, GLORIE, YOU OK?
HEY-- DID GONE MAKE YOU CRY OR SOMETHIN'?
UH... NO, MARK.
I KNOW IT SOUNDS DUMB, BUT ARTIE TOLD ME TO "GO TO MY WOMB."
YEAH, MOM'S ALWAYS TELLIN' ME THE SAME THING.
NO, MARK, "WOMB", NOT "ROOM".
YEAH, HONEY. I MEAN NO, BUT YEAH.
OH. YOU SURE YOU'RE OK?
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU CAN EVEN TALK TO HIM! MOM TOLD ME WHAT HE DID TO YOU.
I SHOULD KICK HIS ASS!
I CAN NEVER FORGIVE HIM, MARK. BUT I'M NO SAINT EITHER. I ONCE STOLE MONEY FROM MY OWN BOSS.
YEAH, BUT I BET YOU DIDN'T MAKE HIM DISAPPEAR.
AACHOOO!
EVERYBODY KEEPS DITCHIN' ME WHEN I TURN MY BACK.
'SCUSE ME, GLORIE. I'M GONNA STRAIGHTEN HIM OUT.
HEY MOM-- WHERE'S ARTIE?

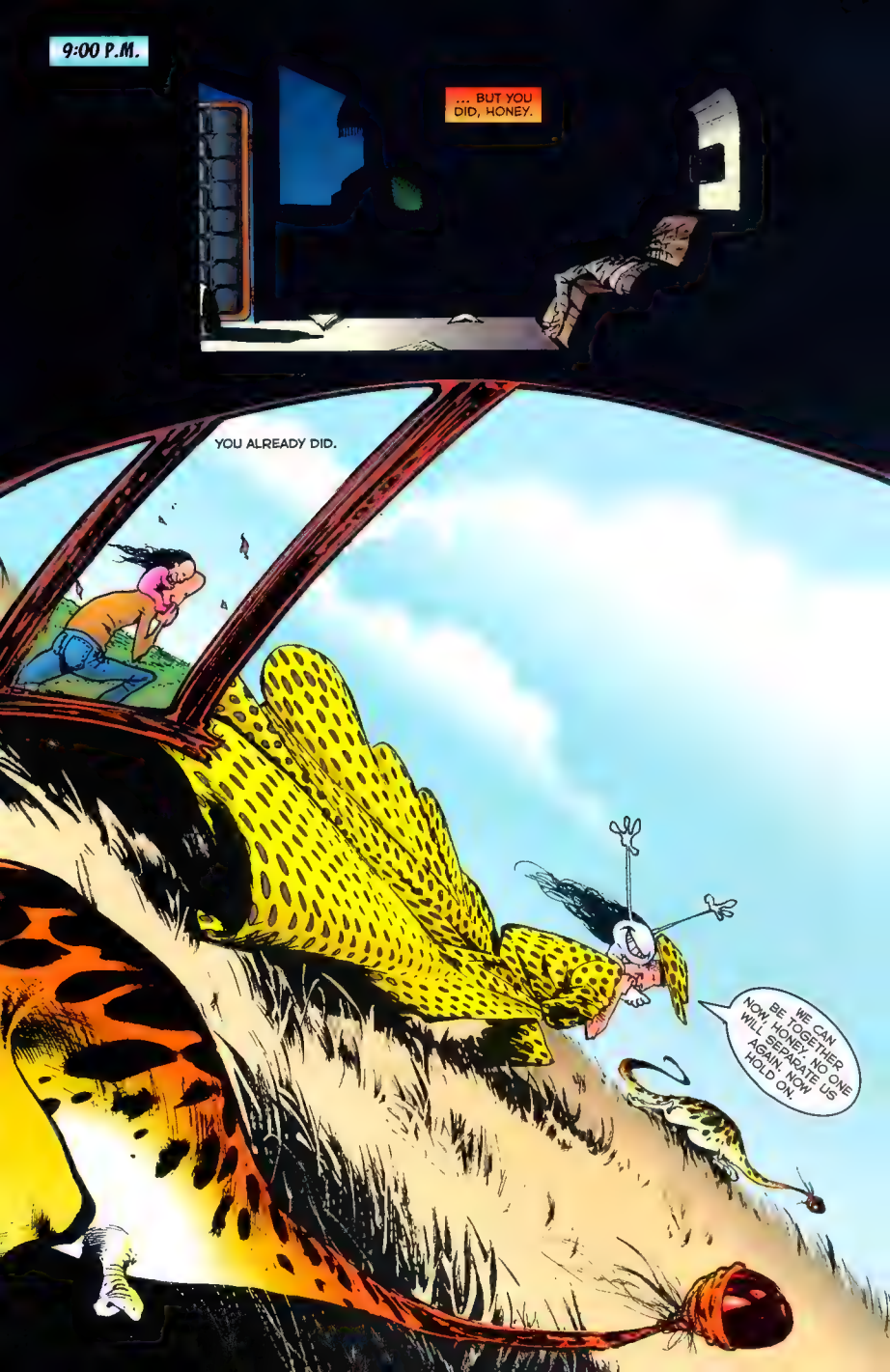

HE'S IN THE TRAILER, MARK.
I THINK IT'S REALLY LAME HOW YOU'RE ALL DESERTING GLORIE.
SHE'S GONNA BE OK, MARK.
BUT SHE'S NOT OK!
...NOW SHE IS.
I DIDN'T EVEN GET TO SAY GOODBYE! AND YOU'RE ALL JUST SITTING HERE ON YOUR ASSES!!! DOESN'T ANYBODY GIVE A CRAP?!?
MARK, YOU KNOW WE DO.
THEN DO SOMETHING!!!
WHERE'S GONE? FIGURES. HIDING LIKE A COWARD. SO WHO'S NEXT, HUH?
I AM.
JULIE, PLEASE TAKE THE BOY AND SARA BEHIND THE TRAILER. I DON'T WANT THEM TO SEE THIS.
THE MEN THAT COME TONIGHT WILL DO WHAT THEY SHOULD'VE DONE IN THE FIRST PLACE.
BUT DON'T WORRY-- MY SPILLED BLOOD WILL FINALLY SET ME AND SARA FREE.
WAIT, WAIT! I'M SORRY! DON'T LET 'EM HURT ARTIE, MOM!
MARK, SOMEDAY YOU'LL UNDERSTAND.
I DON'T WANT TO UNDERSTAND

FRANKLIN, WHAT THE @%&# ARE YOU *TALKING* ABOUT?
I SWEAR THIS IS THE LAST TIME I WORK WITH A $#@%&*# ALIEN ABDUCTEE. I MEAN IT!
HAVEN'T WE DONE ALL THIS BEFORE?
MOM, DON'T LET 'EM KILL ARTIE!
LOOK, MARK, THIS IS HARD ON ALL OF US.
TRUST ME, KID, IF GONE SAYS YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE THIS...
... YOU DON'T.
HEADLIGHTS-- THEY'RE HERE.
DO SOMETHING!!!
MOM-- SARA'S CRYING. SHE *KNOWS*.
RELAX, MARK. ARTIE SAYS SHE'S REGRESSED TO A CHILD-LIKE STATE. SHE DOESN'T KNOW, SHE JUST FEELS.
BUT MOM.. THAT'S EVEN WORSE.
OK, LARRY. NOW LET'S GET IT RIGHT THIS TIME!!!
YOU COWARDS, ALL OF YOU!
MARK GIVING HIS LIFE FOR HIS DAUGHTER'S THE BRAVEST THING ARTIE'S EVER DONE.


WELL, IT'S ABOUT TIME.
HE'S A SMARTASS, TOO. THIS'LL BE FUN!
I SEE YOU BOYS NEVER GOT YOUR HEADS BACK.
LET ME TURN AND GET A LOOK AT YOU... SOW BUGS, RIGHT?
HE'S NOT EVEN GONNA TRY TO STOP US.
LIKE HE'S GOT A CHOICE?
DAVE, I CAN'T KEEP SARA QUIET! SHE'S FREAKING OUT!
I KNOW IT'S SPLITTING HAIRS...
... BUT I'D RATHER DISAPPEAR THAN HAVE A BULLET IN MY HEAD.
STOP IT! STOP HURTING SARA!!!
SCREEEECH!!!
WHAT THE F%@K WAS THAT?
UH... SOUND LIKE SOMEONE GUTTED A CAT.
YEAH- WELL, IT'S CREEPIN' ME OUT! LET'S DO 'IM 'N GO.
IS ONE OF YOU NAMED HARRY? ONCE I ANGERED A BOY WHO LATER BECAME A SKINHEAD AND SWORE TO RETURN AND FINISH ME OFF. I ALWAYS THOUGHT HE'D BE THE ONE.
NO, ASSHOLE. NOBODY'S A "HARRY".

SHE'S LOSIN' IT.
CAN YOU BLAME HER? THEY'RE KILLING HER DAD, AND YOU'RE HELPING THEM DO IT.
HOLD ON, SARA-- ALMOST HOME.
HOW CAN YOU DO THIS???
MARK, FORGIVE US.
HEY PARNS, WERE YOU REALLY A SKINHEAD NAMED HARRY?
IT'S A LONG STORY GLEN. JUST A SEC.
BLAM!
THERE. LET'S GO.
POP
THEY'VE LEFT.
MARK, WAIT! DAVE, DON'T LET HIM SEE!
SORRY JULIE...
... IT'S TOO LATE FOR THAT.

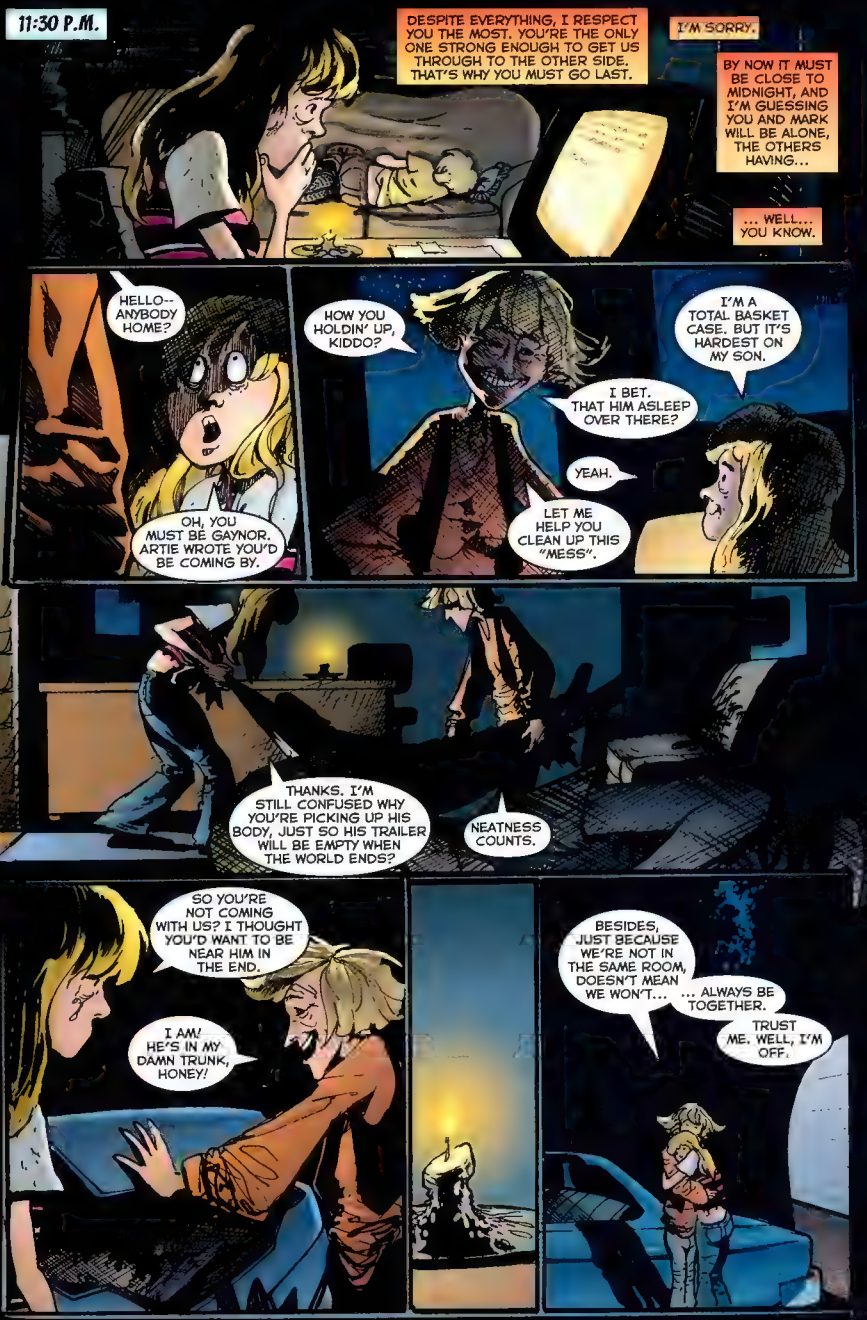
HEY KIDDO, YOU'RE RIGHT ON TIME.
DADDY? WHERE *ARE* WE?
JULIE'S OUTBACK.
WE MADE IT, HONEY! WE'RE HOME.
WE CAN STAY HERE AND PLAY WHERE IT'S SAFE.
YEAH-- BUT I'M STILL AN IS... WITH MY OLD HAIR IN SOMEONE *ELSE'S* OUTBACK.
IS THAT A PROBLEM?
I GUESS NOT. I'M SORTA GETTING USED TO IT. BUT I HAD AN AWFUL DREAM.
SOMEBODY WAS TRYING TO KILL YOU, AND I COULDN'T STOP THEM.
I'M SORRY, DADDY...
I TRIED...
I REALLY TRIED...
BUT I FAILED.
WILL I EVER HAVE TO GO BACK THERE, DADDY?
NOT 'TIL YOU'RE READY, SWEETIE.
GOOD. I WANT TO STAY HERE WITH YOU AND PLAY. DO YOU STILL LOVE ME AS AN IS?
YOU'LL NEVER KNOW HOW MUCH...
HEY-- REMEMBER HOW I USED TO DO THIS?
YEAH, THAT WAS COOL. I WISH MOM WAS HERE.
YEAH, ME TOO.
DADDY, DO YOU FORGIVE ME....
... FOR NOT BEING ABLE TO SAVE YOU?

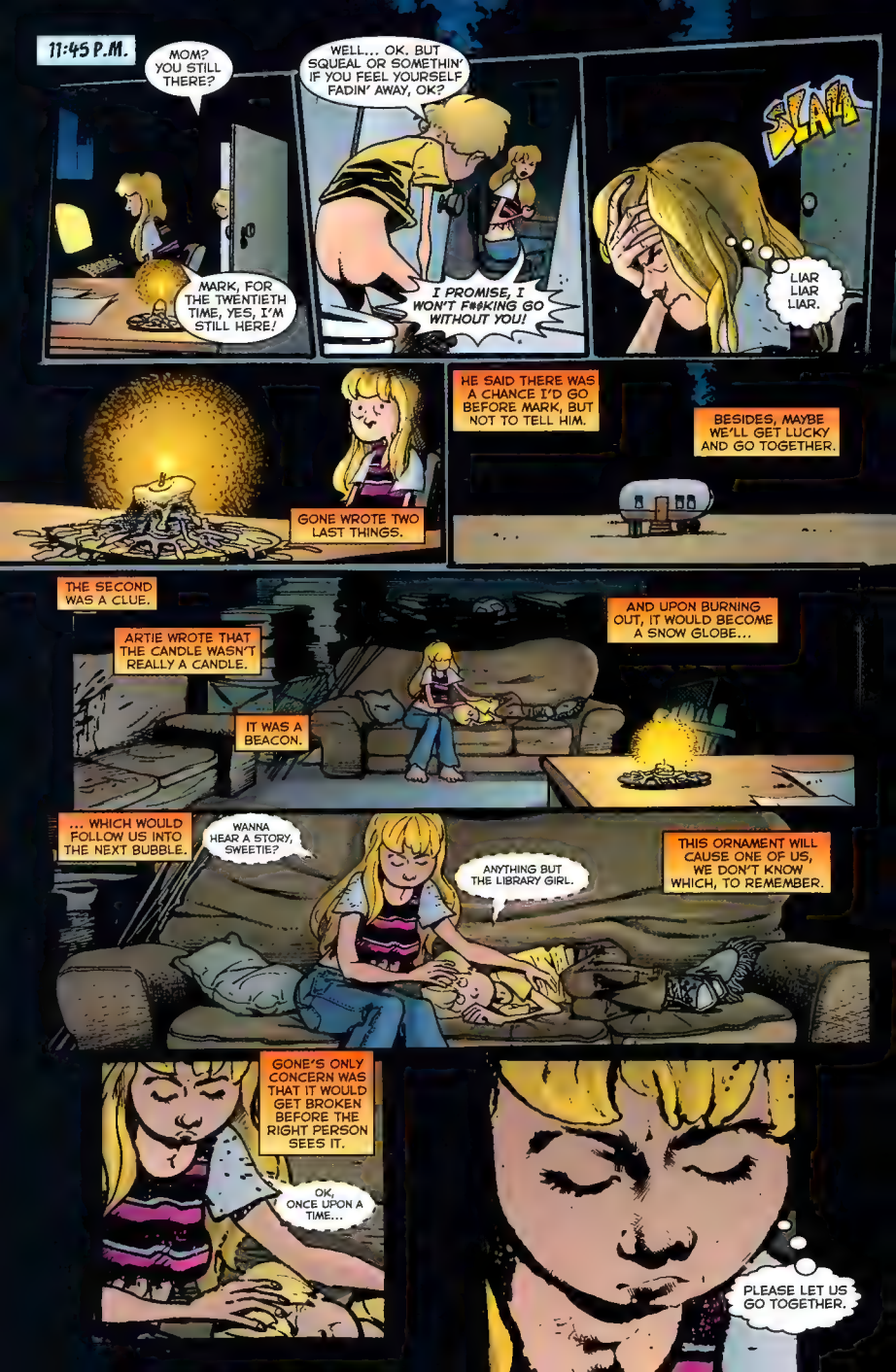

9:00 P.M.
... BUT YOU DID, HONEY.
YOU ALREADY DID.
WE CAN BE TOGETHER NOW, HONEY. NO ONE WILL SEPARATE US AGAIN. NOW HOLD ON.

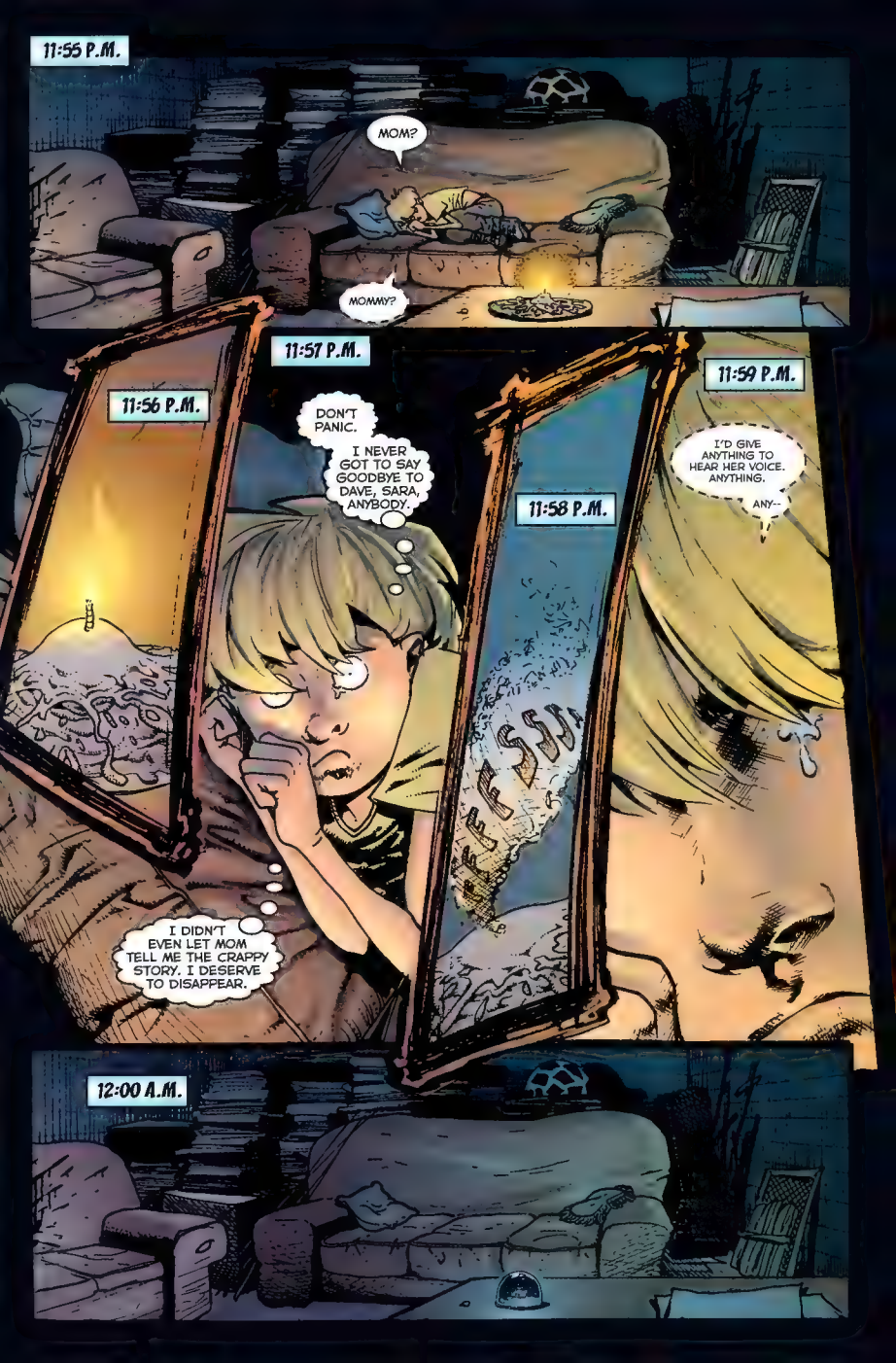
IT'S GONE! HIS YELLOW CAPE DOES NOT FOOL ME, MY QUEEN. ONE OF YOUR ISZ BITES AT HIS NECK, AS OUTBACK CREATURES DOG HIS EVERY MOVE.
IT'S OK, MAXX. HE'S WELCOME HERE, AND THEY'RE PLAYING, NOT FIGHTING...
IF YOU SAY SO, BUT I'LL STILL BE KEEPING AN EYE ON HIM.
FOR I AM...
YES, WE KNOW.
SO THE EVIL HAS A PLACE INSIDE PANGEA.
YES, BRER LAPIN, AFTER ALL...
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
...WHERE ELSE ARE YA GONNA PUT IT?

10:00 P.M.
WE'RE THE LAST ONES LEFT, AND NOW I'VE DESTROYED MARK. HE HATES ME.
HE'S STRONGER THAN YOU THINK. HE ASKED ME TO CALL HIM IF YOU START DISAPPEARING. HE WANTS TO BE WITH YOU WHEN YOU GO.
HE DOESN'T HATE YOU.
THEN WHY'S HE POUTING IN THE TRAILER?
HE'S A BOY. HE NEVER HAD TO LOSE ANYBODY CLOSE, LET ALONE FIVE IN ONE NIGHT.
YEAH, THAT'S TOUGH.
CAN YOU FEEL GONE AND SARA IN YOUR MIND?
NAW, BUT I'M SURE THEY'RE THERE. WE'D'VE HEARD IF THEY DIDN'T MAKE IT.
BOY, HELL OF A NIGHT, HUH?
DAVE. I LOVE YOU. ALWAYS HAVE.
I FEEL CLOSER TO YOU AS A FRIEND THAN ANY OF MY SO-CALLED "LOVERS".
JUL, DON'T START. YOU'LL BREAK ME UP.
TOO LATE.
HEY, GONE SAYS I'LL GET MY FINGERS BACK IN THE NEXT BUBBLE. TOO BAD I WON'T REMEMBER THEY WERE EVEN MISSING. HA HA.
HA.
HEY-- REMEMBER THESE?

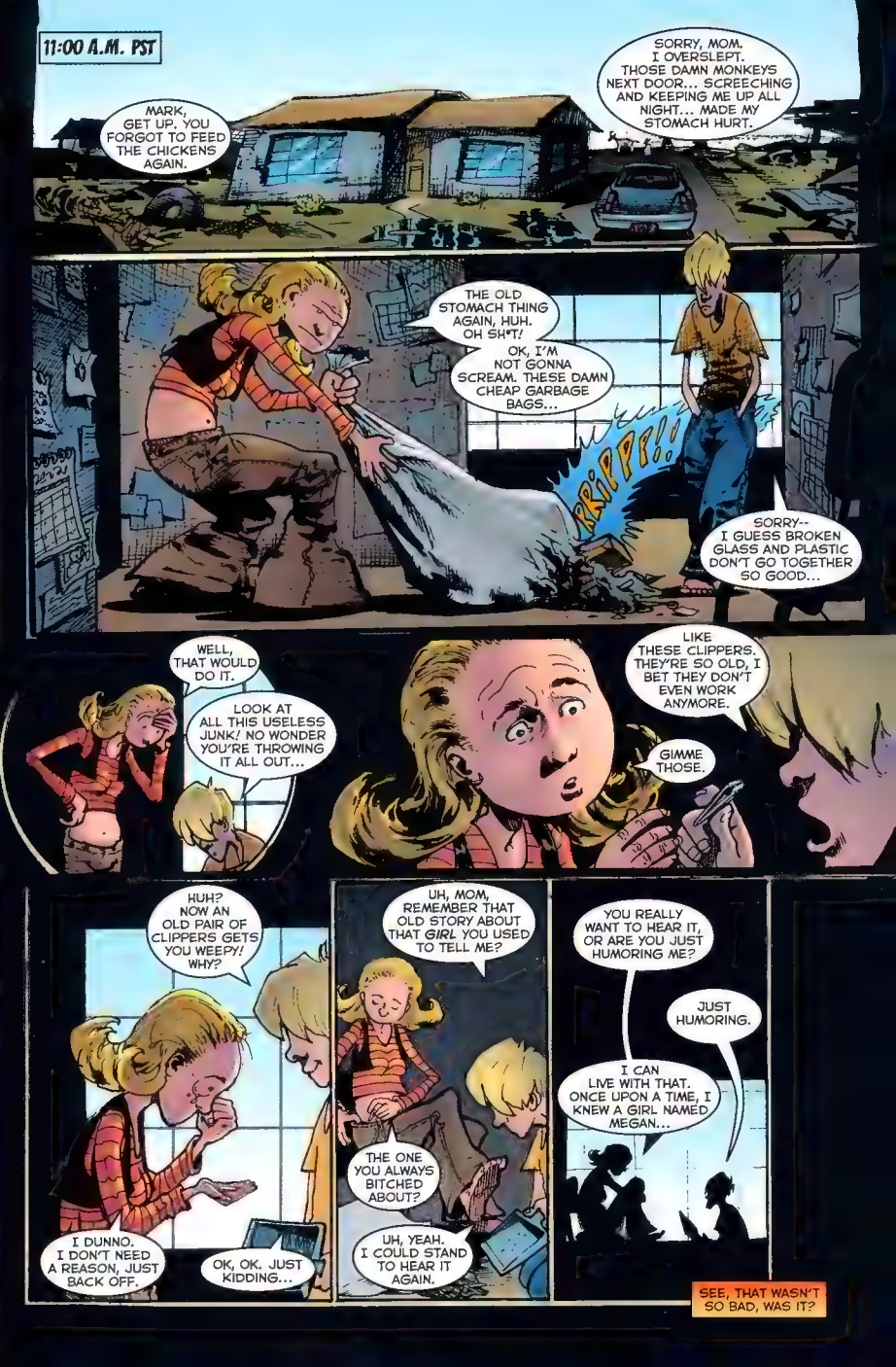
YOU DON'T WANT TO CLIP MY TOENAILS?
IS THAT SOMETHING WE USED TO DO?
I'M KINDA FUZZY ON ALL THAT MAXX STUFF, MOSTLY BEING DAVE NOW. SORRY.
OH... S'OKAY.
SO DO YOU THINK WE'LL EVEN *KNOW* EACH OTHER IN THE NEXT... WHATEVER?
SURE. MAYBE YOU'LL EVEN GET ME TO CLIP YOUR NAILS. 'COURSE YOU MIGHT BE MY GRANNY...
DON'T EVEN JOKE THAT WAY.
HEY, ME 'N MY GRANNY WERE CLOSE. GIMME THOSE.
OK, BUT I'M KEEPIN' 'EM. IT'S MY WAY OF REMEMBERING THE OLD MAXX.
WHAT IF YOU DON'T REMEMBER?
I WILL.


11:30 P.M.
DESPITE EVERYTHING, I RESPECT YOU THE MOST. YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE STRONG ENOUGH TO GET US THROUGH TO THE OTHER SIDE. THAT'S WHY YOU MUST GO LAST.
I'M SORRY.
BY NOW IT MUST BE CLOSE TO MIDNIGHT, AND I'M GUESSING YOU AND MARK WILL BE ALONE, THE OTHERS HAVING...
... WELL... YOU KNOW.
HELLO-- ANYBODY HOME?
OH, YOU MUST BE GAYNOR. ARTIE WROTE YOU'D BE COMING BY.
HOW YOU HOLDIN' UP, KIDDO?
I'M A TOTAL BASKET CASE. BUT IT'S HARDEST ON MY SON.
I BET. THAT HIM ASLEEP OVER THERE?
YEAH.
LET ME HELP YOU CLEAN UP THIS "MESS".
THANKS. I'M STILL CONFUSED WHY YOU'RE PICKING UP HIS BODY, JUST SO HIS TRAILER WILL BE EMPTY WHEN THE WORLD ENDS?
NEATNESS COUNTS.
SO YOU'RE NOT COMING WITH US? I THOUGHT YOU'D WANT TO BE NEAR HIM IN THE END.
I AM! HE'S IN MY DAMN TRUNK, HONEY!
BESIDES, JUST BECAUSE WE'RE NOT IN THE SAME ROOM, DOESN'T MEAN WE WON'T...
... ALWAYS BE TOGETHER.
TRUST ME. WELL, I'M OFF.


11:45 P.M.
MOM? YOU STILL THERE?
MARK, FOR THE TWENTIETH TIME, YES, I'M STILL HERE!
WELL... OK. BUT SQUEAL OR SOMETHIN' IF YOU FEEL YOURSELF FADIN' AWAY, OK?
I PROMISE, I WON'T F#@KING GO WITHOUT YOU!
SLAM
LIAR LIAR LIAR.
GONE WROTE TWO LAST THINGS.
HE SAID THERE WAS A CHANCE I'D GO BEFORE MARK, BUT NOT TO TELL HIM.
BESIDES, MAYBE WE'LL GET LUCKY AND GO TOGETHER.
THE SECOND WAS A CLUE.
ARTIE WROTE THAT THE CANDLE WASN'T REALLY A CANDLE.
IT WAS A BEACON.
AND UPON BURNING OUT, IT WOULD BECOME A SNOW GLOBE...
... WHICH WOULD FOLLOW US INTO THE NEXT BUBBLE.
WANNA HEAR A STORY, SWEETIE?
ANYTHING BUT THE LIBRARY GIRL.
THIS ORNAMENT WILL CAUSE ONE OF US, WE DON'T KNOW WHICH, TO REMEMBER.
GONE'S ONLY CONCERN WAS THAT IT WOULD GET BROKEN BEFORE THE RIGHT PERSON SEES IT.
OK, ONCE UPON A TIME...
PLEASE LET US GO TOGETHER.


11:55 P.M.
MOM?
MOMMY?
11:56 P.M.
11:57 P.M.
DON'T PANIC.
I NEVER GOT TO SAY GOODBYE TO DAVE, SARA, ANYBODY.
11:58 P.M.
11:59 P.M.
I'D GIVE ANYTHING TO HEAR HER VOICE. ANYTHING.
ANY--
I DIDN'T EVEN LET MOM TELL ME THE CRAPPY STORY. I DESERVE TO DISAPPEAR.
12:00 A.M.

DR. PENDER? YOU IN HERE?
YEAH, DAVE. JUST THOUGHT I'D WORK A LITTLE LATE TONIGHT.
KINDA DARK TO BE GRADING PAPERS, ISN'T IT?
OH... RIGHT. GO AHEAD AND TURN ON THE LIGHT. I WAS JUST THINKING.
'BOUT WHAT?
ABOUT LIFE. I NEVER PLANNED TO TEACH AT A COMMUNITY COLLEGE-- I JUST WOUND UP DOING IT. JUST MAKES YA THINK.
DON'T YOU EVER REGRET THE ROAD YOUR LIFE HAS TAKEN?
I DIDN'T PLAN ON BEING A JANITOR, EITHER, BUT I DON'T BEAT MYSELF UP ABOUT IT.
HEY DOC, WHAT'D YOU ALWAYS WANT TO BE WHEN YOU WERE A KID?
OH, I DUNNO. MAYBE SOMETHING EXOTIC-- A MAGICIAN. MAYBE AN INDIAN. I ALWAYS HATED COWBOYS.
ME TOO.
MAYBE YOU ALREADY *ARE* A MAGICIAN, BUT YOU JUST DON'T KNOW IT. HEH HEH.
LISTEN, DOC, WHEN I WAS A LITTLE BOY, AND THE GIRL NEXT DOOR MOVED AWAY, I THOUGHT MY WHOLE LIFE HAD ENDED.
AND NOW THAT YOU'RE OLDER, YOU SEE OTHERWISE.
I'VE TOLD YOU THIS ALREADY, HUH?
YEAH, BUT TELL ME AGAIN...
HEY, WHERE'D THAT SNOW GLOBE ON YOUR DESK COME FROM?
I DON'T KNOW. IT WASN'T THERE A MINUTE AGO...


11:00 A.M. PST
MARK, GET UP. YOU FORGOT TO FEED THE CHICKENS AGAIN.
SORRY, MOM. I OVERSLEPT. THOSE DAMN MONKEYS NEXT DOOR... SCREECHING AND KEEPING ME UP ALL NIGHT... MADE MY STOMACH HURT.
THE OLD STOMACH THING AGAIN, HUH. OH SH*T!
OK, I'M NOT GONNA SCREAM. THESE DAMN CHEAP GARBAGE BAGS...
RRIPPP!!
SORRY-- I GUESS BROKEN GLASS AND PLASTIC DON'T GO TOGETHER SO GOOD...
WELL, THAT WOULD DO IT.
LOOK AT ALL THIS USELESS JUNK! NO WONDER YOU'RE THROWING IT ALL OUT...
LIKE THESE CLIPPERS. THEY'RE SO OLD, I BET THEY DON'T EVEN WORK ANYMORE.
GIMME THOSE.
HUH? NOW AN OLD PAIR OF CLIPPERS GETS YOU WEEPY! WHY?
I DUNNO. I DON'T NEED A REASON, JUST BACK OFF.
OK, OK. JUST KIDDING...
UH, MOM, REMEMBER THAT OLD STORY ABOUT THAT GIRL YOU USED TO TELL ME?
THE ONE YOU ALWAYS BITCHED ABOUT?
UH, YEAH. I COULD STAND TO HEAR IT AGAIN.
YOU REALLY WANT TO HEAR IT, OR ARE YOU JUST HUMORING ME?
JUST HUMORING.
I CAN LIVE WITH THAT. ONCE UPON A TIME, I KNEW A GIRL NAMED MEGAN...
SEE, THAT WASN'T SO BAD, WAS IT?

SAM interviews HIMSELF

(since nobody else will...)

Q) SAM: This is really sad. How can you end The Maxx??!?

A) SAM: Actually, it was already "over" (or at least Dave and Julie's story was) at Issue 20. #21-35 was Sara, and that's done too. It's more a case of me not giving proper closure to everything. Hopefully, this issue will do that.

Q) SAM: So Maxx won't show up anymore? Only FOM stories? Who's the main character?

A) SAM: The story will revolve around Dave, teenage Mark, Julie and other FOM characters that will show up. (Wait 'til Julie wakes up from a drunken one-night stand with Charlie!) But Dave as Hero is gone. That doesn't mean superheroes, Outbacks and other weird stuff won't arise. But it's my sad fate (and my fans') to no longer be the person who created The Maxx. Everyone has to move on—even me. Sorry.

Q) SAM: How come you strung everybody along for so long, keeping Sara an Is in that bathroom?

A) SAM: Fans thought the newer stories were stopping a really good "Sara-as-an-Is" story which they assumed was waiting in the wings. It wasn't. I had no idea what to do after turning her into an Is, which was a one-note joke. Turning her back seemed capricious, as she had no body to return to, since it was already blown up.

Q) SAM: So why not stop milking The Maxx title and change to Friends of Maxx?

A) SAM: From a fan point of view, that makes sense. But retailer perceptions know books by their creators:

- Cerebus=Sim,
- Sandman=Gaiman
- Maxx=Kieth

FOM proved it's an uphill battle to introduce a "real world" book into a crowded superhero market. Retailers have specifically asked me NOT to change the title, just to continue as is. And that doesn't seem like too much to ask, does it? I mean, if it helps retailers stock it, I'd call it My Left Foot. It's the content that matters, not the title, right? The other thing is, The Maxx is not just a guy in a purple suit—he's a part of all the characters in ways which have yet to be revealed. So in that sense, he'll never be gone, either. In that case, why change the title?

Q) SAM: Will the old Maxx and Julie ever show up again?

A) SAM: You mean will these characters ever remember being the old Maxx and Julie? Possibly. But we can't go "home" again—I tried. It doesn't work, at least not for me. Anyway, you know how they say the same people keep showing up in different incarnations to work stuff out? Same here. Maybe Dave will be the mailman, or Mark's uncle, or a friend. Seeing old people in new incarnations will be half the fun! Whatever has happened to them isn't invalidated for us just because they don't remember it.

Happy New Year!!!

As we casually mentioned last month, our POBx got swiped out from under us as of January 1. So remember, as of January 1, all snail mail addressed to us at 4363 Hazel will be sent back "Return to Sender—Address Unknown". Maxx may now be reached ONLY at POBox 2410, Orangevale, CA 95662 or skieth@webin-fo.net. Them's yer ONLY choices. And art has to come snail. Get them pens a-scratchin'!!!

Hey, Sam-O,

My spririt animal is a female lemur. Boy, does she piss me off. But anyways, I was wondering just what the hell goes through your head when you're doin' these fine funny books? I know I think of Janet Reno or Madeline Albright or some other "well-endowed" woman. Or Pepsi. Or as I'm writing this now, hamsters in my pants. But that's just me. Howz about you?

Paul Skowronski
Maple Hts., OH

Hamsters—in your pants? I knew I had 'em in the wrong place...

Sam,

I just wanted to tell you that your work makes me look at life in a different perspective and I wanted to thank you for opening up that window. The book is very unique and you should be proud that your work is reaching the people who need it.

Brian in the PA suburbs
bmf05@aol.com

Thanks, Brian. Unique. That's for sure.

#33 continues to break some people into a sweat:

Dear Mr. Kieth,

WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT!!!!!!!

I just finished #33 and boy was it.....well, eccentric. I love The Maxx and I've followed the story faithfully—I was even one of the few people who thought that the horse-head Maxx was cool, and I love the story.

I like all the little stories about supporting characters, and actually I did like #33 because it was funny and I like the little music notes. But why so bizarre? It's actually quite good—I like bizarre—I just want to see Maxx kick somone's ass, then you can go back to some character-related stories. Don't get the wrong picture, I'm not an idiot who thinks comics should be all action, I just want The Maxx, I guess.

Justin Volpe

Sam—

#33 scared the bewillikers out of me... frightening in that way where you have no control over your situation... which is a lot more scary than some freak in a hockeymask with a kick-ass machete. PLEASE!! Keep the stories dark... scare me. And if there's a little time left over, make me laugh my ass off...

Mr. Jeffrey

That's The Maxx: redemption through frightening situations as you laugh your ass off.

Sam,

#33 certainly was a hard read for me the first time through. The second (or maybe third) time, though, I found something that made it all make sense. Uncle Freddy says "Little Doody [meaning Dude Japan], I'm yer shadow, just as Trixie here is Mickey's." There ya go, Freddy is simply a representation of the sexual side of Dude, and Trixie's the sexual side of Mickey. The whole comic is simply an analogy to their crumbling relationship. Of course, this begs the question, what do the fat guy and the dog stand for? I'm drawing a blank there... could use some help...

the sfc

The dog represents... (sigh). Aw, who'm I kidding? I have no idea what the dog means...

Dear Sam,

I've just finished reading #33 and I think this was the best issue since #26 and definitely the weirdest since the Maxx/Julie/Gone storyline ended. I was already thinking that I was getting used to the weirdness, but I'm glad that isn't so.

Now let's see if I get all this: Mickey and Dude (complete with Elvis-like sideburns) are kidnapped by Trixie and Uncle Freddy who are reflections of the ugly aspects of their personalities and manifestations of the secrets they keep "bottled up". Now Freddy an' Trixie are going to try to find out what happened at that mysterious party all those years ago. Meanwhile, Freddy plays wheelbarrow with a chihuahua called Blanco, and three oranges walk around playing a song called "The Love for Three Oranges" on tiny instruments. And Trixie changes Freddy's diapers after Maynard falls out of a window. Who says Sam Kieth stories don't make sense? After 15 cups of coffee and eight Snickers, they make perfect sense!

Of the four storylines you've started, this one is definitely my favorite, with Megan a close second.

Still enjoying the coffee,
Daudi Carrodeguas
Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Yup. You get it better than me.

Sam Kieth, you are one sick man.

I've been an avid reader of The Maxx since #1 and have not *ever* been provoked to voice my opinion of your eccentric psychological equilibrium until after reading #33. This story, featuring FOM characters Dude and Mickey, makes Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* "gimp" scene seem like a regular episode of Wiley Coyote vs. The Road Runner! Now, I can quite adequately handle watching an egotistical dog and what looks to be an insecure cat in their usual antics like spanking, wheelbarrowing or changing diapers on TV. However, it is totally a different scenario when it involves two head-shaven hairy men doing such lurid acts! Not that I'm saying there's anything wrong with *that*, but to this very minute I'm still

quivering at the thought…
Gary Lau
Uh, one of those head-shaven men was a gal, but I see your point.

Hi Sam,
After reading #33 I have to ask you, are you an opera fan? I am, and *The Love for Three Oranges* is one of my favorites. *The Fiery Angel* by the same composer is another of my favorites, especially the ending, hee hee. Maybe you know what I mean, maybe you don't.
Gabriel Glymph
Honolulu, HI
Mahalo, and yes, it's true. In my endless quest through eclectic music, I've inhaled a bit of opera. But consider this: one of my favorites by Prokofiev is his Classical Symphony #1. Later, listening to Sublime, guess what random piece of music plays in the background to Raleigh Theodore Sakers on *Robbin' in the Hood*? That's right—Classical Symphony #1! I'm pretty sure the Sublime guys didn't even know what it was, since they didn't mention it in the copyright info. This synchronicity was how I knew Raleigh Sakers had to be the voice of Uncle Freddy.
If anybody's not a Sublime or Prokofiev fan, ignore all the above.

Lemme get this straight.
The world ended because of a dead CIA agent's ashes? And what in the heck do Mickey and Dude have to do with it? I don't even wanna KNOW what Fred's deal is. BTW, could we have a flashback or something where you show Julie in bellbottoms again? Please? I really miss them.
Okey-dokey, smokey
Eric Helms
The new Julie with Mark (last pg. this ish)—bellbottoms done. As to the world ending, remember it's just that bubbles version of the world. (For more on bubbles, read this ish.)

Dear Sam Kieth,
You know what you should do? You should do a story of what happened to that woman in "I Spit on Your Grave". I saw that the other day and was like, "Jeez, I wonder what became of her? Was she locked away in an asylum? Did she go on killing? Did she live a normal life? And what was the confrontation between her and that one guy's wife like?"
I think you would be the perfect person to do this story. You're great at laying out the emotions of damaged goods **(that's because I are some)** and the intricacies of a person's mental state.
Think about it, man.
Joe Shmoe
Doodyville, NY
Wow. I think we've found someone weirder than me (that's a compliment).

Hey everyone!
I went down to my local comic store today and they had these cool Maxx Christmas ornaments in the store. Have you guys seen these—it's a porcelain statue of The Maxx hanging from a string with a black Is biting on his foot. It's really cool.
Matt Valenzuela
Clay Moore's ornament looks great—thanks, Clay!

Sam,
I always thought it would cost very little money to make a feature-length movie out of the MTV animated series and give it a limited release. It would probably only play in limited release in major cities, but might become a midnight circuit hit, and would certainly boost sales of the video and book.
MBrianKell
Great idea! Maybe someday, but knowing MTV…
Just a quick note to let you know that a second Maxx season on MTV is in limbo, behind the movie which is also in limbo, waiting to return to me. If there is a Maxx movie, better to do it right, and the only way to do that is for me to control it. Be patient.

Artie got some mail:
Dear Sam,
I have this enormous obsession with Mr. Gone. I think he's the coolest. I don't like that he rapes people, but I love his attitude toward things, how it's so dark and cynical. I'm on this chat thing called The Palace all the time (www.thepalace.com) and I'm always at palace.thepalace.com PORT 9998 and, you guessed it—my user name is Mr. Gone and I hang out in the pit.
Thanx
Jeff Stahler

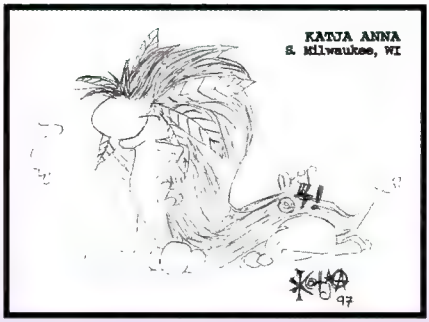
Dear Sam,
In #26, there's a picture of Gone sitting with the blind Aborigine babies, and next to him is some lady in a striped dress (p.8). Who the hell is that?
DJ Inkognito
Pittsburgh, PA
She's an Aborigine woman that was cold, so Gone gave her his shirt.
Geez—people have stopped giving us their names altogether. Everybody's afraid to get misspelled, I guess.
Or maybe they don't want their relatives to know they read the book…

Dear Sam,
A while back you asked us if we could forgive Gone for raping those women now that we knew how he grew up, and what his aunt did to him. I know this response is very late to that question, but I thought I should still write it.
My sister has been raped, twice. Seeing what it has done to her (she is anorexic still after a few years, was bulemic as well but not so much anymore, likes to cut herself though this too is fading, and has tried to kill herself a couple of times now), I can't say I can forgive the people who did this to her. Believe me, I have tried, but I'm still too angry at them. In that respect, no, I can't forgive Gone. What he did to those women, no matter his motivation, is, in my mind, unforgivable.
One thing that this whole Gone revelation HAS done, though, is possibly help me understand it a little better. Looking at what these guys did to my sister, I have no idea why they would do that, but what you have shown through Gone is that maybe these people have deep, underlying emotional problems of their own, and that is why they are acting this way. If that is true, while I don't forgive them, it does help me to understand them, so I guess thank you for that.

Keep up the good work; yours is one of the few books I still read.

Dave
Kirksville, MO

That's cool. Nobody said you have to forgive him. Or even understand. And separating who a person is from what they do shouldn't release blame for those actions.



Sam,

Bring Gone back!

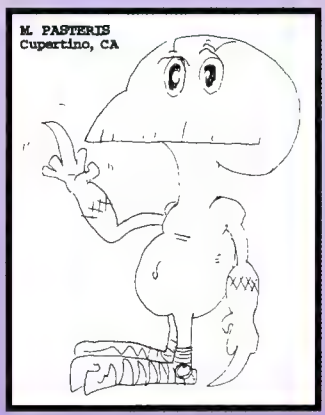
Every character in the book that has entered the Outback seems to have entered as almost an alter-ego. Gone, more than anybody, has been in and out of multiple Outbacks. So, what if part of Gone was left behind in these Outbacks, thereby creating a Gone persona separate from Artie. This new Gone would have never gone through the self-rehabilitation that Artie did, thus leaving you with the old Mr. Gone. The new Gone, having been "born" in one of (if not simultaneously ALL of) the Outbacks, wouldn't have a sense of which plane of reality is, in fact, real. Nor would he have the full set of memories of what went on with Julie, Dave and that whole gang.

So how does he jump into the story? Well, after evolving on different planes and becoming quite the "Outback hopper", he begins to wonder who the people in his distorted memories are. This sets him on a course to find them, eventually running into Artie, who is mutually bewildered by his own existence. Of course all kinds of confrontations ensue, including Julie and Maxx going after Artie, thinking he has reverted to his old way, and Artie and Gone having quite the dispute over who is REAL and who has the right to continue existing.

It's just an idea I came up with while sitting around at work this morning scratching my ass **{sounds like me at work}**, so I won't mind if you hate it.

Toodles,
Montani

Gee, after all the time it took to get Gone integrated into one psyche? While I like the plot possibilities of Artie meeting Gone, it feels a little too close to how split my psyche is. But I hear ya—exorcising Gone's demons is therapeutic, and I too miss the old Gone.



Hi,

Did you happen to catch Gen13 interactive #2? In the story, the Gen13 kids all have "dreams" while the villain tries to steal their Gen factor. Grunge has a dream that he is The Maxx.

Later,
Mike

Hey—I'm writing The Maxx Gen13 ish as we speak. For those who still want to see Dave and his spirit animal, the Maxx/Gen13 cross should give you a fix. But it won't be out for a while. I want it to be good.

Dear Sam Kieth,

My name is Matias Castro, I'm 21 and Uruguayan. The first time I saw your work was at Aliens: female war. What impressed me most was the way you draw people, specially women, but I saw something really different in the way you shape and relate the frames, I mean that you tell us that comics, as an art, can't be surrounded only in square lines; as an art, comics must be done as free as the imagination lets the artist. I write and draw my own comics and I always try to keep that in mind.

Is amazing how you achieved something new (at least for me) in the comics world, because you're part of the mainstream but without doing mainstream things. I think that hangs me on The Maxx, the very personal and strange elements that you put in it (as the three oranges that appear in #33). I've been buying the Spanish edition until last month when I could get the American edition of #33. The dialogue of the couple in the first scene when they're stealing boxes was great, I mean, it was extremely sensible, it was some kind of catharsis between me and the characters. Until I read that, I thought only Grant Morrison could write that kind of dialogue for a monthly comic, but now I don't.

In my country, is hard to get comics. There are a couple of special shops where you can find a lot of things. Luckily, one of them is now selling the monthly issue of your comic.

Matias Castro
Montevideo, Uruguay

Thanks, Matias. I have great respect for the way comic artists from other countries push the edge of the envelope, and some of the foreign fan art we publish in The Maxx reflects this freedom of thought.

Dear Sam,

I recently read "A Game of You" by Neil Gaiman. There seem to be many similarities between this Sandman story arc and The Maxx. There was a pretty blond heroine, Barbara, who has created a dream world in her mind. There she is a princess, like Julie. Barbara has populated the land with all the toys from her childhood, much like Sara's Outback. The dream creatures can escape and travel between her dream and the "real world". At the end of her journey, Barbara meets a younger version of herself, like Julie and Sara do.

Adam Pare
New York, NY

PS. What's the deal with those oranges?

This is a terrible confession, but I haven't even read The Sandman since I quit. (Oh come on—do you really think Neil reads The Maxx?)

PS. Beats me.

Comments about #34 are starting to trickle in:

Sam—

I see Megan as quite devious as she slipped the Playboy into those boys' books. The girl has spunk. That was a very hairy and scary scene as Megan got ambushed by those boys. If this incident wasn't stopped, I wonder how bad it could have been.

It is interesting to see Megan going through her journey from girl to womanhood. I never realized the horrors that

girls face—you really laid it out on the line, Sam. The body changes that Megan faces are frightening for any young girl. As women get older, they must go through the change of life and that in itself is scary. Then they must deal with the mood changes that come with it. Boys to men (not the rap group) don't have to face the different unknowns that women must face, like pregnancy. I think I would be scared to death, wanting to know if I was going to have a normal childbirth or a Caesarean, if my child was going to be healthy, will it hurt when I give birth, etc. I can think of one thing after another that would make me totally afraid of being a woman.

Yes, Megan is a woman and she is now doing woman things in the restroom and is clumsy about it. This must be quite an awkward feeling for her. The cliffhanger was suspenseful and I am left wondering if Megan and her friends will lose the awareness of the dimension they inhabit? Excellent story, very well told!

Sincerely yours,
Paul Dale Roberts
Sacramento, CA

No. Megan was in the past. And most of the newer stories are part of the new Julie and teen Mark bubble.

Sam—

I like the last issue, the next in the Megan storyline. But I'm still confused as to how you would think we would get the symbolism in this story, about the door and all. It completely miffs me that you'd think we'd pick up on that. I wish you'd just mention it in the story, because symbolism sucks sometimes.

J to the E to the double S Y

OK: Inside the library=dark. Regressive. Introverted. Childlike. Comfortable. Sleepy '40's music. Outside=soccer girls. Light. Maturity. Extroverted. Loud disco music. Growing up. The door is painful, but the way through one world into the next.

Hey,

If Megan is a truly new character (which there seems to be some question about), then we have the ability to see a new Outback, and this one could be some insane bookstore or something cool like that.

Daniel Rich

Dear Sam Kieth and Co.,

After I read your comments on the three ladies who work alongside the gentlemen on the Maxx, I realized something appalling: I'm the only girl I know who reads The Maxx or any other comic, for that matter, and that's just a damn shame because Maxx is one of the coolest comics available today, and I don't see why it wouldn't appeal to girls as much as boys :-(I mean, it's mostly about girls, and not scantilly-clad, cybernetically enhanced super-babe types, either; it's about average, ordinary girls who have been through a lot of bad things in their lives, just like a lot of real girls. I can actually relate a lot to Glorie's inability to stand up for herself. That's a problem a lot of real girls have, and Maxx is the first comic I've read with a character who has that problem. That's one thing that appeals to me about The Maxx.

I also enjoy losing myself in the surrealistic stories, plots and art. Sam is a fab writer and artist—do you mind my gushing a little? **[F%$&, no.]** I love the detail in every picture, but I don't look out for bloopers—I really don't think they're that important.

Keep up the good work, gentlemen and lades. Especially ladies.

Rose M.M.
San Diego, CA

Although it may feel like it, you are not the only one. There are plenty of lady readers, writers, and artists out there. Use Head to Head to connect.

Dear Sam,

Straight out I want to say that Maxx is incredible. It's been wonderfully enjoyable to read it, and it makes it even more fun knowing that it evolves from one comic to the next. And even if you know the ending, the path is open for change.

Your interpretation on the workings of the mind is really a treat. It stretches a neat bridge between a Freudian philosophy and a more Eastern view. Your art is great, and I look forward to each painting I find tucked into those pages. I especially like how you vary sometimes from just one type of paint and mix mediums, like the cover of #28 with the Cheshire cat on it. Your posing is good, the expressions really are evident, and you don't waste a line. I find your painting produces a feeling, and your drawings give reason as to why you're evoking this emotion.

Anyways, it's been interesting looking at the direction Maxx has taken since FOM stopped being published. Would you say you're letting a bit of your FOM creativity leak into Maxx? Keep up the good work, and it's nice to know that our society can support someone like you at doing what they love. You truly are the "bard" of comics.

Jeremy Miller
Vancouver, BC, Canada

While your compliments may be a bit over the top, it helps balance out the times when I wonder what the hell I'm doing. For example:

Dear Sam,

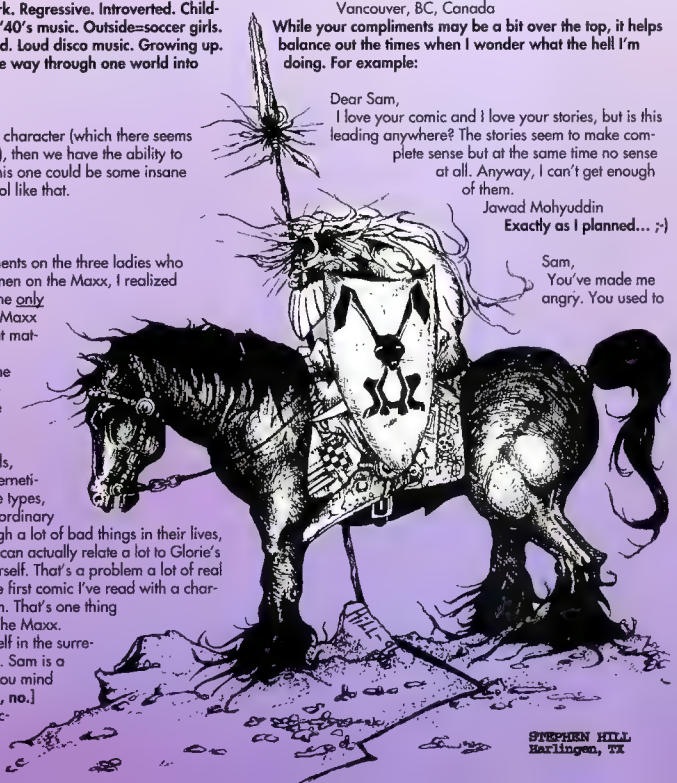
I love your comic and I love your stories, but is this leading anywhere? The stories seem to make complete sense but at the same time no sense at all. Anyway, I can't get enough of them.

Jawad Mohyuddin

Exactly as I planned... ;-)

Sam,

You've made me angry. You used to



have a comic with it all. It had great characters, a great world, great art, and perhaps most importantly it had a great story, both in the short and long term, but you seem to be flushing that down the toilet.

Many of us Mxhds were sceptical of the new storyline beginning with #21. Personally, I thought 1-20 ended great, the circle was closed, and the main mystery was solved. The new story began with just as much if not more potential. It both created new enigmas and wrapped up loose strings, and it peaked with "The Origin of Mr. Gone". You can consider that the masterpiece of your entire book...

But after that it got ugly: you wrapped the story of Norbert and Iago far too quickly (and threw out the whole Steve-Skye-Sara thing) and barely began the new story with the Urn and Sara in the form of an Is before you shied away from it to make a huge bunch of solo stories that have no end. There's no closure to the Megan or Glorie issues—they just ended when you ran out of room, and next issue, do we find out what happens? Do we even find out what happen to the main characters who have been huddled around that bathtub far too long? The answer to both: No.

Instead, we get a story about Mickey and Dude, who have absolutely nothing to do with the main plot. Those two lovebirds were great in FOM, but their story has been told. Your comic is ceasing to be The Maxx—you don't seem to write about that anymore. Your comic has become what FOM was, but if you didn't like that, why did you stop doing FOM?

To make a long story short (TOO LATE!), if you don't want to do The Maxx anymore, don't. If that's the case I just ask you to finish the comic with a blaze of glory, tie it up and start something new. That would be far better than having the story slowly fade away. I love The Maxx, and would rather see it end than lose all its strength.

I don't mind breaks in the big story so we can read little ones (the one about Sara's Grandpa is my favorite ish), but you have taken it way too far. Of course this is all just my opinion.

Brian Woods
Clinton Twp., MI

This guy has a lot of valid points, and his letter was a jolt that I needed. It inspired this whole issue, in fact. I even incorporated some of his comments into Mark's dialogue.

As to where The Maxx Himself should go from here, fans were not shy about their opinions. By the way, a lot of these comments are from the newsgroup I've been hanging out with—I tossed them some of the ideas for this issue and asked for their comments, which, as true Mxhds everywhere, they were not stingy about (thanks, people!!). See the box at the end of MxTrx if you want to join this free newsgroup. Thanks to it and Dave Gruber who runs it, Maxx is becoming more and more interactive!

In a letter to them, I said "Dave isn't going anywhere—just his memory of ever having been The Maxx. And we'll still remember that he was The Maxx, even if he doesn't. My hope was, by erasing everyone's memory, we wouldn't invalidate #1-35 continuity (like Bobby waking up in the shower in Dallas—"last season was all a dream") because each character's emotional dilemma would be the same. E.g., Julie is recovering from an earlier emotional trauma, Dave is confused about his identity (well, pretty much confused about everything), and Mark's dealing with abandonment issues. I think by #38 or so, most people will feel like Dave, Julie and Mark (and Gone, lurking around in Julie's mind) are pretty much the same people dealing with the same emotional dilemma even, in a different "dimension" or "bubble".

JUSTIN
Philadelphia, PA

Some of the newsgroup replies are below. See what you think:

But what is Dave without his confusion? Isn't that Dave's whole character, that he is this clumsy oaf kinda guy—the whole "he tries to do good, but usually just breaks things and f#%&s up"—or something like that—that is the Dave that I would miss, the superhero that doesn't really want his powers but is stuck with them and other responsibilities out of his control. He kinda just has this mind that plods along, figures stuff out... And I think more than anything, I liked the way he talks.

—D

As much as it would be cool to see ol' Dave/Maxx again, it would be bad. It would be completely terrible. Dave is Dave. Dave isn't Maxx. And I (and some others) believe this is the way to keep it. Let's not ask Sam to ruin Dave.

And who says Dave couldn't be a clumsy oaf without a purple costume. He could just be "Dave the Clumsy Plumber!"

—Lil' Depressed Boy

Yeah, I'm with you on this one, it wouldn't be right to throw Dave back into the costume now he knows that he isn't Maxx; it wouldn't work. There is so much to develop in Dave himself without pushing him back to wearing a lampshade on his head.

—Emma

On the other hand:

Look, I agree the story must always progress, but without Dave, I think that in a way it would be like having Batman without Batman in it... although I too love FOM and all the other characters that have come along into the storyline, and I love all the subplots in the book, for me my main attention has always been drawn to Gone and Dave. It was Dave as the Maxx that drew me into the show and then the comic, and it is still Dave's character that stirs my appetite (that metaphor didn't quite come out right, but you get what I mean I hope). For me, Dave is an integral part of The Maxx.

—D

Except Dave isn't The Maxx. Actually I think Sam should have thought through that title. **[Uh, I don't think anybody would've bought a book called "The Julie'.]** I guess it'd be odd for a comic book not to be named after the main character, at first at least. I mean, Sam shoulda named the comic something that wouldn't tie him down to staying with the same character. The Maxx doesn't completely do that, since there can be more than one "Maxx". Anyway... I'm perfectly fine if Dave leaves. In fact, when he's not The Maxx, I'm not horribly interested in him. At least not as interested as I am in the other characters.

It actually seems that all of our little opinions do end up making a difference in the mag sometimes **[yep, it does, like it or not!]**. I think we should stop worrying about how we think the comic should go, and just see what happens. I was kinda annoyed that Dave ever came back as the Maxx. He never seemed too thrilled about it himself.

—the
maxxonologist sfc

Dave was great, but Dave's story is over. His story had good closure.

—LDB

Whew. All these opinions make my head hurt. This letter helps, though:

It helps me a little to look at #29 as the end of "Phase III" in The Maxx story. The cast is reunited, Iago is defeated, and Sara disappears.

So while the stage is set for Sara's return, we are treated to "Phase IV", a FOM interlude of sorts. Having said that, however, I must admit to growing weary of open-ended stories. I guess I would enjoy a few more tangent stories, provided the OLD ones are wrapped up first. Especially if the new tangent stories are about existing but under-defined characters like Mark, Norbert, Gaynor, Steve, etc.

Wait—did someone actually suggest that Dude and/or Mickey's spirit animal is a trio of citrus fruit? Hmm. How delightfully odd.

—Brian Ghoti

I've pretty much said all I can with Sara. But the rest of your letter is cool.

I may be in the minority here, but I hardly think that The Maxx will suffer without Dave et al. The Maxx is (IMHO) about the interactions between people and a strange little/big place/object that has been alternately named the Outback and Pangaea. I WILL miss those guys and all the good times that they've brought us, but they'll always be there for me: sitting in a neat little column, in a neat little box, protected by plastic and backed by cardboard. The Maxx is eternal!

Above all, it is Sam's playground, and I have yet to be disappointed by one of his romps.

—Me

Lots to think about. Can you stand three more?

Sam,

In my mind, at least, the story hasn't been about Julie since #20. And Maxx has rarely been more than a supporting character to me. From #21 on, this had been a book about Sara and (to a lesser extent) her father. It was losing Sara that set the "core" plot adrift, I think.

In any case, you have at least a dozen characters floating around who are connected to the core plot. you have every reason to explore things from their points of view, as you did with Sara as the focus.

The point is that you have a lot of other material to work with if you're finding Dave/Maxx and Julie uninspiring. If it's the whole Outback thing that you're growing tired with, perhaps a fresh perspective will help (or many fresh perspectives; there's no reason you can't keep jumping among characters). Or maybe not. But it seems worth a try.

And thanks for putting your heart into this.

Adam Sonfield
Arlington, VA

Dear Sam'n'co.,

Sure, the first reason people must have picked up The Maxx is that it looks like everyone's favorite Image superheroes. But how many of us stuck around for that reason?

I feel that the way your circle of friends of Maxx & co. has developed is a true representation of how we get to know people. When you're first introduced to people, you get to know about them like in 1-20. Then you're introduced to some of their close friends and get to know them better (21-30), and finally you start to meet some of their acquaintances. The way the story skips around is just like that. One day you see Maxx or Julie, the next you bump into Mickey and Dude, then an Is who looks kind of familiar passes you in the street...

So please keep us informed about how our friends are doing beyond midnight.

Adeheathen

And finally...

Dear Mr. Kieth,

I'm writing in reference to Brian Keith's letter in #33. I feel his ideas should be fully realized by Mxhds, and Brian Keith

himself. Even myself.

People really shouldn't push you to finish stories. Do not bring these stories to a happy or tragic ending just to satisfy us. That's not life. Life is a constant state of being. Sometimes people want the point to a discussion so much they miss the enjoyment of the conversation itself. Don't get me wrong, Mr. Kieth, understanding is good, but premature understanding can be very hazardous.

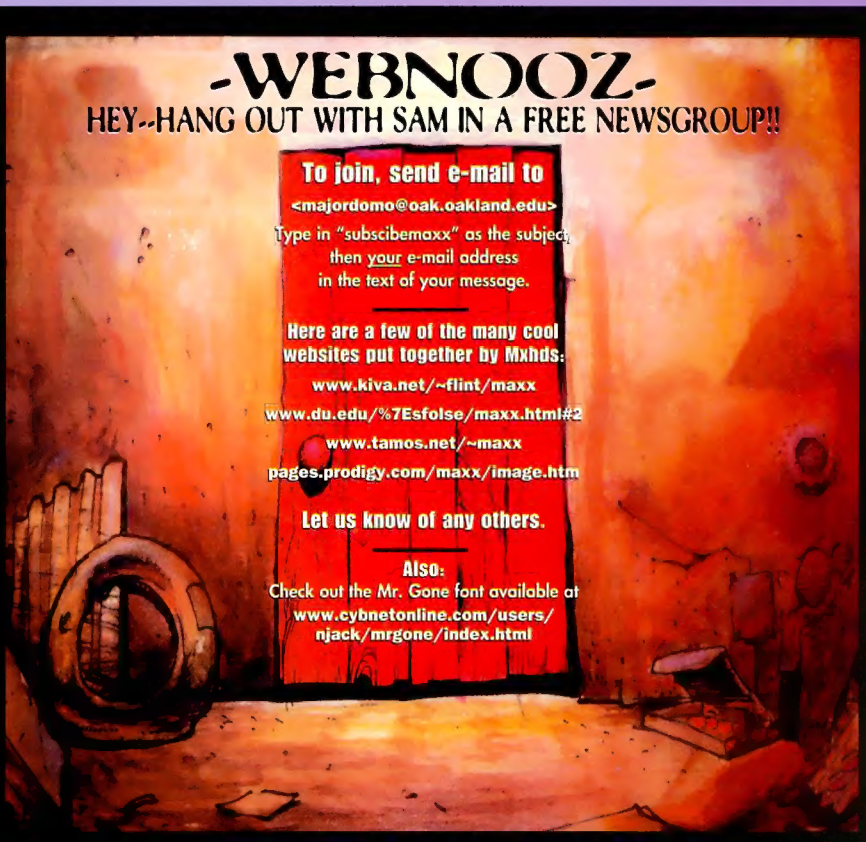
The funny thing is, I understand the madness you apologized for in #33. I am a firm believer in the saying, "Everything happens for a reason." The story is telling you what it is. Your insecurity and lack of faith are only tools of the story. You have more faith than you realize, Mr. Kieth. You'll see what I'm talking about in months to come, when the stories of all the characters (new and old) all begin to form the true comic book called The Maxx. The evidence is right in front of you with what has happened as the comic book FOM has become The Maxx comic book itself. The journey is long—just keep faith in the big picture and keep creating.

Rodney DeVane
Raleigh, NC

So where are we? Well, wherever we may be headed, Rodney is right—let's enjoy the ride! And, like he said, the story is telling me/us what it is. Cool—we're all just gonna have to trust the story!

See you in March. Yes, March. (Oh, stop whining...)

PS/HOUSEKEEPING DETAILS WE GET ASKED ALL THE TIME: No subscriptions or retail sales available/sorry. E-mail is cool/include name & city please/we don't print e-mail addresses unless requested. Use "Head-to-Head" to find back issues/fan clubs/whatever (use the address in the indicia)/postcards are cheap and easy like us/WRITE LEGIBLY. No we don't print all the letters or art we get/too many/yes SAM DOES read them ALL/you might get answered or printed or edited/you might not/life's funny that way. B&w art has better chance of being published than color/send art snailmail only/can't return artwork/sorry. Keep 'em coming/the better the letters and submissions, the better the book! Oh yeah.



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